Islam and Antisemitism

From the religious perspective

And the history of Muslims rescuing Jews under persecution

Zahid Aziz

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K.

ISLAM AND ANTISEMITISM

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by

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Ahmadiyya Anjuman Lahore Publications, U.K.

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15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, U.K., HA0 4JQ

Websites: www.ahmadiyya.org
www.alahmadiyya.org

e-mails: aaiil.uk@gmail.com
info@ahmadiyya.org

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Preface

Due to the political and military conflict between the state of Israel and its Muslim opponents, Islam is being portrayed as teaching antisemitism and hatred for Jews to its followers. This allegation is made directly as well as by insidious implication. In the absence of any Arab-Israeli political and military conflict, it is doubtful that any such charge of antisemitism would have been promoted and circulated against Islam.

These false accusations, whether arising out of ignorance or made as deliberate propaganda, have the effect of undermining the actual merits of the Muslim case and quest for justice in Palestine. What better way to devalue their case than to portray them as belonging to a religion which preaches the kind of antisemitism that the West can see in its own history!

However, the responsibility for spreading this allegation lies not only with the supporters of the state of Israel. Foolishly, some Muslims have picked up the antisemitic views published in Europe and the USA over the past centuries and propagated them in their own communities to demonise Jews as a people. Those Muslims have brought upon themselves the guilt of the West, allowing the latter to escape responsibility.

It is important to note that Islam's opposition to hatred against Jews and maltreatment of them is based on the noble principles laid down in the Quran and taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad some 1400 years ago. On the other hand, the new-found opposition to antisemitism in the modern West stems largely from its recoiling in horror at its own dark and

brutal history of persecution of the Jews. That history culminated in the deployment of Western-invented industrial technology by Germany, perhaps the most culturally and scientifically advanced nation of the West, to kill millions of Jews in the Holocaust in the very heart of modern Western civilisation.

Part I of this book is largely based on sermons and talks I delivered following the start of the war in Gaza between Israel and the Palestinians. Further information has been added to Part I, relevant to the title of this part, *The Religious Perspective*. Part II consists of details I have compiled from reliable and reputable sources relating to events and people, showing that Muslims came to the rescue of Jews under persecution, from the time of the Spanish expulsion five hundred years ago to the Second World War of the 20th century.

This book aims to show that the scripture of Islam, the Quran, and the Founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad, do not preach any kind of hatred of Jews. In fact, they recognise the validity of the prophets and scriptures of the Jews and wish to create harmonious relations with the Jewish people, and require Muslims to come to their defence against antisemitism, whether it be verbal hate or physical persecution.

I have tried to show in this book that the Quran has given moderate, rational, humane and sympathetic teachings about the Jews and their religious history. Only these teachings can establish peace and harmony between Muslims and Jews. In contrast, as Section 7 of Part I shows, the Western supporters of the state of Israel have little regard for the religion of the Jews, and would rather that it ceased to exist in the modern world.

Zahid Aziz, Dr
September 2024

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Part I:
The Religious Perspective

From the Teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad

With a concluding section on Western non-Christian and Christian views on Jews and Israel

1. Muslim belief in the prophets of Israel

Muslims believe in and honour the prophets of Israel

There is a basic point which no one on earth can deny or dispute. It is that the Quran requires Muslims to believe in the prophets of the Jews as a fundamental of Islam and to respect and honour these prophets and take their names with sanctity and reverence. This is why Muslims add the prayer *'alai-is-salām,* meaning 'peace be upon him', after the name of every one of the revered figures of the Jews: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Job, Jonah, who are mentioned in the Quran. Moreover, the Quran is explicit that Muslims must not make any distinction between the prophets of God, and to do so is a great sin. When you respect someone's elders like your own, you cannot be biased against them and hate them as a group.

In the Quran, Muslims are directed as follows:

> "Say: We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us, and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what was given to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit." — 2:136 and 3:84

Muslims thus believe in the prophets of the Israelites in exactly the same way as they believe in the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

From among their prophets, the two verses cited above mention by name Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and the addition of the words "and the tribes" refer to all the other Israelite prophets.[1]

In another place the Quran refers to the guidance given to these prophets as follows:

> "And this was Our argument which We gave to Abraham against his people. We exalt in degrees whom We please. … And We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each did We guide; and Noah did We guide before, and of his descendants, David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And thus do We reward those who do good to others, and Zacharias and John and Jesus and Elias; each one was of the righteous, and Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot; and each one We made to excel the people; and some of their fathers and their descendants and their brethren. And We chose them and guided them to the right way. … These are they to whom We gave the Book and authority and prophecy. … These are they whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance." — 6:83–90

Out of the eighteen prophets named here, all except Ishmael are revered figures of the Jewish religion.

The Quran recounts inspiring events from lives of the prophets of Israel

Events from the lives of many of these prophets are related so frequently and at such great length in the Quran that those accounts would fill a book themselves. Abraham's work and

[1] I have excluded Ishmael and Jesus, who are also mentioned here, since the Jews do not believe them to have been prophets of God.

preaching is mentioned several times and an entire chapter is devoted to the life of Joseph. Moses is mentioned most frequently of all these prophets and key events from his life are related. Certain stories of Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Lot, and Jonah are also found in the Quran. The reason that the Quran contains these accounts is two-fold: to prophesy that events from the lives of previous prophets, showing their difficulties, their perseverance and their ultimate triumph, would be repeated in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and to present to Muslims the noble examples of the previous prophets to emulate.

Chapters of the Quran bear the names of Jonah, Joseph, Abraham and Noah (chs. 10, 12, 14 and 71 respectively). Chapter 3 is entitled *Āl 'Imrān,* 'The Family of Amran', Amran being the father of Moses and Aaron who is mentioned in the Bible as Amram.[2] Chapters 27, *al-Naml,* is named after an incident in the life of Solomon,[3] and chapter 28, *al-Qaṣaṣ,* meaning 'The Narrative', is so-called because it narrates at some length the story of Moses.

High qualities of the prophets of Israel in the Quran

We now turn to some of the noble qualities of the prophets of Israel as mentioned in the Quran.

Noah —

> "Surely he was a grateful servant (of God)." — 17:3
>
> "We granted him among the later generations (the salutation): peace be on Noah among the nations!

[2] See Exodus 6:20, Numbers 26:59 and 1 Chronicles 23:13.

[3] The incident, related in 27:18–19, is interpreted either as referring to a tribe by the name of Namlah or to a party of ants, the word *naml* meaning 'ants'.

> Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely he was one of Our believing servants." —37:78–81

Abraham —

> "And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands he fulfilled them. He said: Surely I will make you a leader of mankind." — 2:124

> "Surely Abraham was a model (of virtue), obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not from among the idolaters, grateful for His favours. He chose him and guided him on the right path. And We gave him good in this world; and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous. Then We revealed to you (O Muhammad): Follow the faith of Abraham, the upright one;" — 16:120–123

> "And We granted him among the later generations (the salutation): Peace be on Abraham! Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely he was one of Our believing servants. And We gave him the good news of Isaac, a prophet, a righteous one. And We blessed him and Isaac." — 37:108–113

Lot —

> "And to Lot We gave wisdom and knowledge, … and We admitted him to Our mercy; surely he was from among the righteous." — 21:74, 75

Isaac and Jacob —

> "We gave him (i.e., Abraham) Isaac and Jacob. And each We made a prophet. And We gave them of Our mercy, and We granted them a truthful mention of eminence." — 19:49–50

> "And We gave him Isaac; and Jacob, a son's son. And We made (them) all good. And We made them leaders who guided (people) by Our command…" — 21:72–73
>
> "And remember Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, possessors of power and insight. We indeed purified them by a pure quality, the keeping in mind of the (final) abode. And surely they were with Us, among the elect, the best." — 38:45–47

Joseph —

> Jacob said to Joseph: "And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of sayings, and make His favour complete to you and to the Children of Jacob, as He made it complete before to your fathers, Abraham and Isaac." — 12:6
>
> "And when he attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good. … Surely he was one of Our chosen servants." — 12:22, 24
>
> "And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked. We bestow Our mercy on whom We please, and We do not waste the reward of the doers of good." — 12:56

Moses (and Aaron) —

> "Again, We gave the Book to Moses to complete (Our blessings) on him who would do good, and making plain all things and a guidance and a mercy, so that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord." — 6:154
>
> "He (Allah) said: O Moses, surely I have chosen you above the people by My messages and My words." — 7:144

"And mention Moses in the Book. Surely he was one purified, and was a messenger, a prophet. And We called to him from the blessed side of the mountain, and We made him draw near to Us in communion. And We gave him out of Our mercy his brother Aaron, a prophet." — 19:51–53

Allah said to Moses: "And I have chosen you for Myself." — 20:41

"And certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the criterion and a light and a reminder for those who guard against evil," — 21:48

"And when he attained his maturity and became full-grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward those who do good to others." — 28:14

"(Moses said to Allah:) And my brother, Aaron, he is more eloquent in speech than I, so send him with me as a helper to confirm me. Surely I fear that they would reject me. He (Allah) said: We will strengthen your arm with your brother, and We will give you both an authority, so that they shall not reach you. With Our signs, you two and those who follow you, will triumph." — 28:34–35

"And certainly We conferred a favour on Moses and Aaron. And We delivered them and their people from the mighty distress. And We helped them, so they were triumphant. And We gave them both the clear Book. And We guided them on the right way. And We granted them among the later generations (the salutation): Peace be on Moses and Aaron! Thus do

We reward the doers of good. Surely they were both from among Our believing servants." — 37:114–122

"And We indeed gave Moses the guidance, and We made the Children of Israel inherit the Book — a guidance and a reminder for those who have understanding." — 40:53–54

Saul —

"And their prophet (Samuel) said to them: Allah has raised Saul to be a king over you. … Surely Allah has chosen him above you, and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique. And Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases." — 2:247

David and Solomon —

"And David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased." — 2:251

"… and We gave to David a scripture." — 4:163

"And David and Solomon … to each (of them) We gave wisdom and knowledge. And We made the mountains, declaring (Our) glory, and the birds, subservient to David. And We were the Doers." — 21:78, 79

"And certainly We gave knowledge to David and Solomon. And they said: Praise be to Allah, Who has made us excel many of His believing servants!" — 27:15

"… he (Solomon) said: My Lord, grant me that I may be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good such as You are pleased with, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous servants." — 27:19

> "And certainly We gave David abundance from Us: O mountains, repeat praises with him, and the birds, and We made iron pliant to him, … Give thanks, O people of David! And very few of My servants are grateful." — 34:10, 13
>
> "… and remember Our servant David, the possessor of power. He ever turned (to Allah). … And We strengthened his kingdom and We gave him wisdom and a clear judgment. … and surely he had a nearness to Us and an excellent destination." — 38:17, 20, 25
>
> "And We gave to David Solomon. Most excellent the servant! Surely he ever turned (to Allah)." — 38:30

Job —

> "And Job, when he cried to his Lord: Distress has afflicted me, and You are the most Merciful of those who show mercy! So We responded to him and removed the distress he had, and We gave him (back) his people and more like them with them, a mercy from Us and a reminder to the worshippers." — 21:83–84
>
> "And remember Our servant Job. When he cried to his Lord: The devil has afflicted me with toil and torment. … And We gave him (back) his people and more like them with them, a mercy from Us, and a reminder for those who have understanding. … Surely We found him patient; most excellent the servant! Surely he (ever) turned (to Us)." — 38:41, 43, 44

Jonah —

> "… so he called out among afflictions: There is no God but You, glory be to You! Surely I am a sufferer of loss.

> So We responded to him and delivered him from grief. And thus do We deliver the believers." — 21:87–88
>
> "And Jonah was surely one of the messengers." — 37:139
>
> "Then his Lord chose him, and He made him one of the righteous." — 68:50

The high position assigned by the Quran to these sacred figures of the Jewish religion, placing them in the same category as the Holy Prophet Muhammad, should now be amply evident from the quotations given above.

2. Meanings of names ‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob’ in the Bible and the Quran

“And We gave him Isaac; and Jacob, a son’s son. And We made them all good. And We made them leaders who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of charity, and Us (alone) they served;” — The Quran, 21:72–73

The name ‘Jacob’

Suppose you had an adversary or opponent, who is hostile to you for personal or religious reasons, and you discovered that in his own records he describes one of his forefathers, after whom his family is named, as a deceiver, liar and usurper, what would you do? You would be over-joyed and use this admission against him, declaring that your opponent himself admits to be descended from a person known for his dishonesty.

As opposed to this, our Holy Prophet Muhammad was a man of such high principles that he never exploited the foolish statements of the opponents of Islam for his own advantage. Here I am referring to the life and character of Jacob as presented by the Jews and the Christians from their religious scripture. Muslims call Jacob as *Ya‘qūb,* and append to his name the prayer *‘alai-hi-s-salām,* meaning ‘peace be upon him’.

Jacob is the figure to whom God gave the name 'Israel', after which his descendants are known as the Children of Israel or Israelites, also known as Jews. In modern times, this name Israel was also selected for the present-day state of Israel.

How did Jacob acquire this name? In the Bible, in the Old Testament, accepted by both Jews and Christians as their scripture, which contains an account of the life of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, an incident is related that one night, when Jacob was alone, a mysterious man came to him, and Jacob spent the entire night wrestling with him. When morning came and the man wanted to depart, Jacob told him that he would only let him go if he blessed him. The man, after asking Jacob his name, said to him:

> "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome." —Genesis, 32:28

Learned and scholarly Jewish and Christian authorities on the Bible are perplexed as to how there could be wrestling between a man and God, and on top of that the man overcomes? However, God disclosed the solution to this puzzle to the unlettered and uneducated Prophet, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, in his revelation. In chapter 73 of the Quran (*Sūrah al-Muzammil*), when the Holy Prophet is commanded to "rise to pray by night", which is called the *Tahajjud* prayer, he was told:

> "The rising (to pray) by night is surely the firmest way to tread and most effective in speech." —73:6

The words translated as "the firmest way to tread" are *a<u>sh</u>addu wa-ṭ-an,* which mean having the greatest strength to trample something underfoot, and that thing here is the human self. We can say that the wrestling of Jacob during the

night was, therefore, against his lower self to overcome it. It can symbolically be represented as wrestling with God, because, after all, it is God Who has given humans their self. Such a representation of God is similar to that in the well-known couplet of poetry by Allama Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal, famous poet-philosopher and Muslim thinker of the Indian subcontinent, which we can translate as follows:

> "Elevate your inner self so high that before issuing any decree of destiny, God Himself asks you: Tell me, what would you like?"

Obviously in the real sense God never issues any decree of destiny after enquiring from a human what he would like.

Meaning of *Israel* in Arabic

As to the meaning of the word *Isrā'īl* in Arabic, Maulana Muhammad Ali gives an explanation in his Urdu commentary of the Quran, *Bayān-ul-Qur'ān,* under 2:40, where the term *Banī Isrā'īl* occurs for the first time in the Quran. He writes that *isr* means a servant, slave or captive, and *īl* is used in the Bible to mean God. Hence he says:

> "Therefore the literal meaning of *Isrā'īl* is Abdullah or the servant of Allah." [1]

How did the modern state of Israel get its name?

Historical record of the time shows that the name Israel was chosen for the modern state of Israel on 12 May 1948, only two days before its proclamation as a sovereign state. The founders of this state held a meeting on that date to discuss various possible names. Other names were suggested first, but these

[1] We may note here that the word *asīr* occurs in the Quran, 76:8, as meaning a captive or slave, and *asrā* occurs as its plural in 8:67 and 8:70.

were ruled out as unsatisfactory. In the end it was decided to use the name Israel, but some people at the meeting were still unhappy with it.[2] In the reference I have given in the footnote here, the name Israel is described as an "unenthusiastic choice". We may thus say that God compelled them to adopt this name because it means Abdullah, and that one day this nation may decide to become Abdullah in the real sense. This may seem unlikely, or even impossible, but these are among the works of God which man cannot comprehend.

Name 'Jacob'

Turning to the name 'Jacob', Muslims will be astonished to learn that according to the Bible, and its Jewish and Christian followers and scholars, the name Jacob means a deceiver and usurper, who tries to take away someone else's rights for himself.[3] They explain that it is from the Hebrew word *aqeb,* meaning "heel", which carries the significance of grabbing someone's heel from behind in order to supplant him and usurp his rightful place. The same word *'aqab* is used in Arabic and Urdu to mean something which follows, or comes after or behind.

According to the account of the life of Jacob in the Bible, Jacob was born as a twin. His twin brother was called Esau, and as Esau came out of his mother's womb first, before Jacob, he was the elder brother with the birthright of succession to the father. His story in the Bible contains incidents which present

[2] See the detailed article by Martin Kramer, historian of the Middle East at Tel Aviv University: https://martinkramer.org/2020/04/27/1948-why-the-name-israel/.

[3] See the Got Questions website:
https://www.gotquestions.org/what-does-Israel-mean.html
and Apologetics Press website: https://apologeticspress.org/why-was-jacob-still-called-jacob-after-his-name-was-changed-to-israel-1009/

him as always trying to rob his older twin brother Esau of his birthright by means of blackmail, deceit and falsehood. That story tells us that the name 'Jacob' justly applied to him because he kept on trying to pull Esau's heel in order to usurp his birthright and was successful in doing so. In the Bible, at the point where he is given the name 'Jacob' in Genesis 25:26, the translators of the New King James Version add a footnote which says that this name means: "*Supplanter or Deceitful, lit. One Who Takes the Heel.*" Other translations of the Bible add a similar footnote here.

In the Bible account, on one occasion when Esau returned from doing hard labour in the fields, and was exhausted and starving, he asked Jacob to give him food. It is then stated:

> "Jacob replied, First sell me your birthright. Esau said, Look, I am about to die; so what use is a birthright to me? Then Jacob said: Swear to me first. So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew." — Genesis, 25:31–34 (NIV)

On another occasion as related in Genesis 27:1–36, when their father Isaac, a prophet of God, was on his deathbed, and was blind, he told Esau that he wanted to pass on Divine blessings to him and that he should bring him some meat to eat, and he would pass on those blessings to him. In the religion of the Israelites, prophethood went from the father to a son, so Isaac wanted to pass his prophethood and succession to Esau, as being the elder son. Their mother Rebekah overheard the conversation between Isaac and Esau, and when Esau went to the field to hunt an animal to bring meat, she told Jacob to bring food and meat to Isaac and pretend to be Esau and receive the blessings intended for Esau. But Jacob pointed out a problem with this plan. He said to his mother:

> "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." — Genesis, 27:11–12 (NKJV)

The mother solved this problem in this way. She took Esau's best clothes and got Jacob to put those on, and she covered his hands and neck with goat skins. Jacob then went to his blind father and said to him: "I am Esau your firstborn". He thus told a lie. Isaac asked him how he had come so quickly bringing the meat. Jacob replied: "Because the Lord your God brought it to me." So, not only did Jacob make the false claim of being Esau, he then presented God as his accomplice to make him succeed in this falsehood.

Isaac then felt Jacob's skin and said: "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau". But Jacob falsely confirmed to him that he was Esau. So Isaac blessed him and prayed for him. Shortly after this, Esau returned in order to get the blessing, and discovered that his father had already given it to Jacob. The father said: "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." Esau replied: "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!"

At this point, Genesis 27:36, there is again a footnote in the New King James Version to say that the name 'Jacob' means: "*Supplanter* or *Deceitful,* lit. *One Who Takes the Heel."* I also consulted an Urdu translation of the Bible and found that at verse 6 of this chapter the translators had added a subheading یعقوب کا اِسحاق کو فریب دینا, "Jacob deceives Isaac."

The Quran presents Jacob as righteous to the utmost degree

However, the description of Jacob in the Quran is completely the opposite of what the Bible calls him. Referring to Abraham, the Quran says:

> "And We gave him Isaac; and Jacob, a son's son. And We made (them) all good. And We made them leaders who guided (people) by Our command, and We revealed to them the doing of good and the keeping up of prayer and the giving of charity, and Us (alone) they served." — 21:72–73

At another place, mentioning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by name all together, it says:

> "And remember Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, possessors of power and insight. We indeed purified them by a pure quality, the keeping in mind of the (final) abode. And surely they were with Us, among the elect, the best." — 38:45–47

Again, referring to Abraham, it says:

> "And We gave him Isaac and Jacob. Each did We guide." — 6:84

Chapter 12 of the Quran, entitled 'Joseph', narrates the story of Jacob's son Joseph in detail. In that story, when Jacob takes a promise from his ten errant sons, whom he did not trust entirely, he says to them:

> "Allah is Guardian over what we say. … Judgment is only Allah's. On Him I rely, and on Him let the reliant rely." — 12:66–67

If Jacob himself had lied to his own father and deceived him, could he teach his sons these values? Jacob also showed exemplary patience and resignation to God's will when he lost his son Joseph and later this was compounded by the loss of Joseph's younger brother Benjamin. About these losses he said to his other sons: "patience is best" — *fa ṣabr-un jamīl* (12:18, 12:83). That is what the father Israel exercised and advised, and it has perhaps a lesson for the state of Israel today.

True meaning of Jacob 'grasping the heel'

The Quran thus fully exonerates Jacob of committing any kind of fraud, falsehood or deceit. As to the meaning of his name as given by Jewish and Christian scholars, 'he grasps the heel', just look at the wonderful interpretation given by Lahore Ahmadiyya scholars to this meaning! Maulana Abdul Haq Vidyarthi has explained that it does not mean that he pulls someone down from behind by his heel in order to take his place, but that it means he grasps the heel of his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham in order to follow them in righteousness.

This meaning is supported by the Quran since it lists their names together. It relates that when Joseph preached his religion to his fellow-prisoners in jail, he said: "And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob" (12:38). We have already quoted above the statements: "And remember Our servants Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, possessors of power and insight" (38:45), and: "We gave him Isaac; and Jacob, a son's son" (21:72).

The Quran also refers to the glad tidings given by God to Abraham's wife Sarah that she would have a son in the following words: "Then We gave her the good news of Isaac, and coming behind Isaac, of Jacob" (11:71). The Arabic words

for "and coming behind Isaac, of Jacob" are: *wa min warā' Isḥāq, Ya'qūb*. This indicates that Jacob followed in the heels of his father in treading the right path.

It is perhaps the supreme irony in the religious history of the world, a unique occurrence, that the man Jacob, who was given the name Israel, *after which the people and the state of Israel are named,* is presented in their own scripture as **a deceiver, liar, committer of fraud and usurper,** but that same man is declared in the scripture of the Muslims as **purified and guided by God, one of the elect and the best, righteous, and a model of patience under suffering!** This is the enormous favour done by the Quran to the Jews and a free gift offered to them by the religion of Islam, that it has exonerated their forefather from their own allegations against him.

If the Holy Prophet Muhammad had been a self-seeking man, putting his own interests first, he would have exploited this portrayal of Jacob's character in the Bible, as well as the similar negative portrayal of many other major prophets in the Bible, for his own ends. He would have pointed out these events to claim that the founders and great figures of previous religions were false, and he himself was the only truthful one, especially as even his detractors of his time had given him the titles of *ṣādiq* and *amīn* (the truthful one and the faithful one). But God revealed to him what all messengers are in the eyes of God. This revelation is in the following words:

> "O messengers, eat of the good things and do good. Surely I am Knower of what you do. And surely this your community is one community, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me." — 23:51–52

All prophets and messengers are declared here to be members of the same group. So the Holy Prophet was saying to the

followers of the Bible: If Jacob was a deceiver and liar, then I cannot be truthful and faithful; and conversely, if I am truthful and faithful, then so was Jacob. Past prophets of other religions before him were true and sincere, just like him, and it was their followers who had deviated from the teachings of these holy men. It seems that they had imputed these false incidents of unlawful behaviour to their prophets in order to justify their own misbehaviour of committing wrongdoing, usurping others' rights and other acts of injustice.

Therefore the message of Islam to the followers of other faiths, in particular to the Jews and Christians is this: Your founders were righteous messengers of God, and this Messenger Muhammad has arisen to show you what they were really like, and not as portrayed in your stories.

I conclude this section with the prayer that God may turn the hearts of all people towards the real examples set by all the prophets, both Israelite prophets and non-Israelite prophets.

3. Israelite wars in the Bible contrasted with the Quran

Israelite wars in the Quran

Both the Bible and the Quran relate that Moses and his followers were saved from the Pharaoh in Egypt by crossing over the sea from there to the land now known as the Sinai peninsula. Both the Quran and the Bible tell us that, after the crossing, the Israelites were later required to fight a number of local tribes. The Quran says:

> "(Moses said:) My people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has ordained for you and do not turn your backs, for then you will turn back losers. They said: Moses, in it are a powerful people, and we shall not enter it until they go out from it; if they go out from it, then surely we will enter. … They said: Moses, we will never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore you and your Lord, and fight; surely here we sit." —5:21–24

Moses is ordering his people to fight one such nation, but they refuse because they fear that the enemy is too strong or they just do not want to fight.

Referring to a time some 400 years later, when Saul was made their King and they had to fight a battle under him, the Quran says:

> "…How often has a small group overcome a numerous army by Allah's permission! And Allah is with the

> steadfast. And when they went out against Goliath and his forces, they said: Our Lord, pour out patience on us and make our steps firm and help us against the disbelieving people. So they put them to flight by Allah's permission. And David killed Goliath, and Allah gave him kingdom and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased. …" —2:249–251

Their enemy had a warrior of a huge size and strength called Goliath. David, who was young at the time, offered to go to fight this giant of a man, and Saul sent him. David succeeded in his combat with Goliath and killed him. Hence we have the expression, David versus Goliath, when a small force stands up to fight a much more powerful force. The Quran and the Bible both relate these events, the Quran doing it very briefly, and the Bible in great detail.

Commands for brutal conduct of war in the Bible

However, the Bible also records other wars of Moses and his successors, in which the Israelites behaved most brutally towards their enemies, and this brutality, says the Bible, was commanded by God Himself. According to the Bible, God instructed them, by His revelation to Moses, about fighting their enemies in their new land as follows:

> "and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy." — Deuteronomy, 7:2 (NIV)

Later on, the same instructions say in regard to cities which were very far away from them:

> "When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and

> shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby." — Deuteronomy, 20:10–15

The instructions go on to say about the near cities:

> "However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them … as the Lord your God has commanded you." — Deuteronomy, 20:16–17

Actual brutal conduct of Israelite wars given in the Bible

The Bible then records numerous instances in which these instructions were carried out in practice. Moses sent a force of 12,000 troops for a revenge attack on the people of a country known as Midian. The Bible says:

> "They fought against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every man. … The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder. They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps. They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals." — Numbers, 31:7, 9–11

But when they brought back the captives and the spoils of this war, Moses was displeased that they had let the women and children live:

> "Have you allowed all the women to live?, he asked them. … Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man." — Numbers, 31:15, 17–18

The spoils from this war included several hundred thousand animals, and 32,000 virgin women (Numbers, 31:32).

After the death of Moses, the leader of the Israelites was Joshua. Muslims also believe in him as a prophet. Under his military leadership, the Israelites captured several cities, one after another, starting with Jericho. After victory there it is stated:

> "They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it — men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys." — Joshua, 6:21

Regarding the next city conquered by Joshua, called Ai, it is stated:

> "When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the wilderness where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it. Twelve thousand men and women fell that day — all the people of Ai. For Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed all who lived in Ai. But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder

> of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua." — Joshua, 8:24–27

After this, the book of Joshua in the Bible mentions a series of several cities conquered by him. In each case it is stated that he destroyed the city and killed everyone in it, leaving no survivors. After mentioning these conquests it is stated:

> "So Joshua subdued the whole region… together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded." — Joshua, 10:40

In the next chapter of the book of Joshua, the conquest of more cities is related and it is stated at the end:

> "The Israelites carried off for themselves all the plunder and livestock of these cities, but all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed. As the Lord commanded his servant Moses, so Moses commanded Joshua, and Joshua did it; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses." — Joshua, 11:14–15

It is further added that it was God Himself who caused the enemies of the Israelites to rise up against them so that Joshua "might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the Lord had commanded Moses" (11:20).

I mentioned above Kings Saul and David, who came some 400 years later. According to 1 Samuel 15:1–2, Saul was told that God had given the instruction, regarding a certain enemy nation, that he should attack them:

> "and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children

> and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys." — 1 Samuel, 15:1–3

About the prophet and king David it is stated:

> "Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes." — 1 Samuel, 27:9

The Quran presents Israelite wars as noble, not brutal

The Quran contains *no mention or even any hint whatsoever* of such brutal Israelite wars, even though it gives accounts of events from the lives of these prophets and from Israelite history. The two incidents that the Quran has related in connection with the wars of the Israelites (see earlier pp. 22–23) are those which, in fact, *convey noble and inspiring lessons.* They do not portray the Israelite prophets as carrying out wholesale slaughter of the defeated enemies of their nation and exterminating them, but rather as being courageous, patient and steadfast in the face of overwhelming odds.

In the incident of Moses, from which I only quoted some extracts at the beginning of this section (the Quran, 5:21–24), he urged his community to fight their enemies, but they refused. Only two men stood with Moses. Moses replied to his people that he had no control over their actions, so they are responsible for their own refusal to fight. This incident teaches us that when our leader calls us to action to save the community from its opponents, we must not ignore his call and sit by idly. And if there are only a handful among us who wish to answer the call, they should stand up like the two men who responded to Moses' call.

The second incident, that of Saul, David and Goliath, again if you read it in full in the Quran (2:249–251), and not just the parts I quoted in brief above, it teaches us that a smaller group,

exercising patience and steadfastness, can triumph over an enemy vastly greater in number and power, but it must make sacrifices to succeed.

This is another great favour that the Quran has done to the Jews, that it has not included, nor referred to, nor even hinted at, those stories of wars in their own scripture which show them as wiping out entire nations or killing every human except for their virgin women and taking these as the bounties won in war, and doing all this under the leadership of their great prophets who themselves were acting under God's commandments. The Quran has saved their image from being blackened and tarnished by not mentioning any such story.

Whether these brutalities were actually perpetrated for some justifiable reasons which are now not known to us, or these accounts are gross exaggerations made by those who wanted to glorify the power and dominance of their nation, it is difficult to say.

I close this section with the following guidance from the Quran about responding to attacks. Although it is directed at Muslims, any civilised nation can benefit from it:

> "And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of what you were afflicted with. But if you show patience, it is certainly best for the patient." — 16:126
>
> "Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you is enmity would be as if he were a warm friend." — 41:34
>
> "It may be that Allah will bring about friendship between you and those of them whom you hold as enemies. And Allah is Powerful; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." — 60:7

4. Downfall of the Israelites, but water to come from rocks

> "O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I (God) bestowed on you and that I made you excel the nations." — The Quran, 2:47

> "Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, in fact worse in hardness. And surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth; and there are some of them which split apart so water flows from them; and there are some of them which fall down in awe of Allah. And Allah is not heedless of what you do." — The Quran, 2:74

Israelites made to excel other nations

The Holy Quran, close to the beginning of its second chapter, deals with the history of the Israelites (*Banī Isrā'īl* or the Jews). It begins this history in v. 40 with the words:

> "O Children of Israel, call to mind My favour which I bestowed on you. …"

Then in v. 47, which I quoted above, and later in v. 122, it adds to it these words:

> "and that I made you excel the nations."

A nation on whom Allah bestowed His own favour, or *ni'mat,* and He made it to excel other nations, cannot be regarded as bad in its origin, no matter what wrong form its

later deeds may have taken. The favour which God has mentioned begins with Him saving them from the Pharaoh, drowning this tyrant and his army, and bringing the Israelites to safety across the sea. This was then followed by the great favour of granting a scripture and a law to them through Moses. They were also granted rule in the land under David and Solomon, with Solomon ruling over an extensive territory. Prophets appeared among them one after another. In terms of these favours, God made them excel other nations.

The Arab idol-worshippers, who were opponents of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, in fact his kinsmen, said that the revelation received by Moses and that received by the Holy Prophet Muhammad were just two false books deceiving people, but supporting each other, and that they disbelieved in both revelations. The Quran directed the Holy Prophet to reply as follows:

> "Then bring some (other) Book from Allah which is a better guide than these two, I will follow it." — 28:49

Although prophets appeared among all nations, yet it seems that they were more numerous among the Israelites up to the time of their last prophet, Jesus, than other nations, and that before the Quran came into the world the books of the Israelites were the best guide out of all the scriptures of the world.

The excelling of the Jews over other nations, as mentioned in the Quran, may also be interpreted in another way. In the past one thousand years or so, Jews have made a vast contribution in many fields of life, such as science, art, literature, philosophy, etc. First, they made these contributions while living and prospering under Muslim rule under the *Khalifas* in Baghdad and under Muslim rule in Spain. Later they made these

contributions under modern Western civilisation. Their contributions were much more than would be expected from their small population as compared to other communities. Thus the statement in the Quran is fulfilled in this way as well.

Their deviation and downfall

Then the Quran gives an account of the repeated deviation of the Israelites from the teachings of their prophets, even during the time of Moses, the founder of their law. They preached good but did not practise it, as the Quran says of them:

> "Do you tell people to be good and neglect your own souls while you read the Book? Have you then no sense?" — 2:44

They turned to the worship of man-made gods and idols, they were reluctant to believe in God unless He appeared before their eyes, they complained about any hardship they were required to undergo for the sake of their religion, and they opposed and even tried to kill their own prophets.

These are not accusations made against them only by the Quran but were already stated against them in their own scriptures by their own prophets. In fact, their own prophets used very strong language against their repeated turning to idol-worship. Some of their prophets told the Israelites that they were like God's bride and He was a devoted and loving husband to them. But they, the bride, deserted Him repeatedly for one man after another. A Christian commentator of the Bible explains about the prophet Ezekiel[1] that God revealed to him that the Israelites were originally like a helpless baby whom God rescued, then this baby girl was engaged and

[1] See: https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-commentary/bible-commentary-ezekiel-16 on Ezekiel, ch. 16.

married to her rescuer, but then this prophet says that the wife turned into a prostitute and baby killer. All this is of course a metaphorical description.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Hosea denounce the people of Israel for their degenerate condition in the strongest terms. Isaiah described them as:

> "… the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned[2] the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him." — Isaiah, 1:4 (NIV)

God said to the prophet Jeremiah:

> "Have you seen what backsliding Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot." — Jeremiah, 3:6 (NKJV)

This refers to their worship of idols and performing the rituals of idol-worshipping nations, and this word 'harlot', meaning 'prostitute', is used numerous times in the Bible to condemn the Israelites for this misdeed.

God revealed to the prophet Hosea to say to the children of Israel about their ills and evils:

> "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed." — Hosea, 4:1–2 (NKJV)

[2] In the New King James Version of the Bible, instead of "they have spurned" it says: "They have provoked to anger".

As to killing their prophets, when Jesus arose among the Israelites he told their religious leaders that they were hypocrites because, he said:

> "You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. … Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you…" — Matthew, 23:29–31, 37

There is thus no justification for accusing the Quran of speaking badly about the Jews. The Quran is simply referring to the wrongs they committed against God as mentioned and denounced by their own scriptures in detail in very strong language.

Muslims to degenerate like the Israelites

It should also be remembered that many Muslim scholars of the Quran have expressed the view that the reason why the Quran recounts the moral downfall and degeneration of the Israelites is to warn the Muslims that they would suffer a similar downfall. Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maudoodi, the famous orthodox, Sunni religious leader, in his commentary of the Quran, *Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān,* writes under these verses which start at v. 40 of chapter 2 that while it is the Jews who are mentioned and addressed here:

> "it is also meant to forewarn the Muslims against the pitfalls of degeneration into which the followers of the former Prophets had fallen. That is why, on the one hand, the moral weaknesses of the Jews, their wrong notions about religion, their wrong ways of thinking

> and living, have been pointed out, one by one, while, on the other, the demands of the true faith have been stated so that the Muslims are able to see the Right Way clearly and avoid wrong ways. The Holy Prophet knew by Divine inspiration that, by and by, the Muslims also would follow the same ways … Therefore, according to a hadith, he forewarned that they would discard the Guidance and follow, step by step, the communities of the former Prophets, that is, the Jews and the Christians, in their wrong ways."

Forgiveness for the Israelites and "water from rocks"

In the account given in the Quran at the beginning of chapter 2, it is stated that again and again God forgave the disobedience of the Jews. To quote:

> "Then We pardoned you after that so that you may give thanks." —2:52
>
> "So He turned to you mercifully. Surely He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful." — 2:54
>
> "… make petition for forgiveness. We will forgive you your wrongs and increase the reward of those who do good (to others)." — 2:58

Then the Quran tells us what happened when they repeated their sins after being forgiven each time. This is in the second verse I quoted at the head of this section:

> "Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, in fact worse in hardness. And surely there are some rocks from which streams burst forth; and there are some of them which split apart so water flows from them; and there are some of them which

> fall down in awe of (or reverence for) Allah. And Allah is not heedless of what you do." — 2:74

Commenting on this verse, Maulana Muhammad Ali writes:

> "The hardened hearts are likened to rocks, and then metaphorically spoken of as bursting forth so that streams of water flow from them; others are spoken of as splitting apart so that water flows from them; others still as falling down for fear of Allah. The significance is clear; even hardened hearts would receive life — nay more, they would give life to others, be a source of spiritual life for others as water and streams are sources of life in the physical world." [3]

A famous scientific achievement of the modern state of Israel is that it has performed the amazing feat of creating farms in its desert and turned sand into green fields. Its desert agriculture is renowned in the world. Israel produces more fruit per year than the much bigger country of Pakistan, and its tomato yield for every acre planted is six times the average per acre for the world as a whole. All this is due to its water management and extensive, record-breaking recycling of waste water. And as a well-known international magazine put it: "the country has become one of the world's leaders in how to wring the most out of parsimonious amounts of rainfall and turn a parched landscape into a productive garden." [4]

This is like the picture portrayed in the above verse of the Quran, of streams of water coming from hard rocks and water

[3] *The Holy Quran, Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary* by Maulana Muhammad Ali (2002 reprint), under 2:74.

[4] *The Christian Science Monitor,* June 2015.

flowing from them. The Quran is clearly saying that just as this happens in the physical sense, it can happen also in the spiritual sense, so that hearts would also no longer remain hard and spiritual deserts. The hearts would open up, they would fall before Allah in awe and gratitude, the water of truth of the Quran would flow inside them and they would become the sources for spreading its truth to others in the world.

Sounds impossible for the present day state of Israel, doesn't it? It is when such prophesied apparent impossibilities become reality that the Quran is proved to be the Word of God.

5. Islam on Jews

Salvation for the Jews as being "People of the Book"

Close to the beginning of the Holy Quran, while speaking of the history of the Israelites in the time of Moses, the following verse is interjected:

> "Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Christians and the Sabians — whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good — they have their reward with their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve." — 2:62

A verse revealed much later, finding place in chapter 5, is of similar wording:

> "Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians — whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good — there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve." — 5:69

It is note-worthy that, in these verses, Jews are mentioned next to Muslims, immediately after "those who believe". It is indicated in these verses that what matters in God's eyes is a person's belief in God, belief in the eventual accountability of one's actions before God, and the doing of good deeds. The followers of the various religions mentioned, including Muslims and Jews, consider these as the key principles of their religions. So they ought to act on these principles. Considering themselves as the specially chosen and forgiven ones of God,

because they call themselves by labels such as Muslim, Jew, or Christian, is not a claim which has any value with God.

Another similar verse in the Quran is the following:

> "Those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and those who set up partners (with Allah) — surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection. Surely Allah is Witness over all things." — 22:17

This verse does not mention any reward from God, like the two previous verses quoted, but merely says that followers of all religions, as well as those whose religion was only idol-worship, will have their differences decided by God on the Day of Judgment.

The purport of these verses is that God judges everyone by the same standards, whether Muslim, Jew or Christian, or anyone else. The placing of the Jews in the same category as everyone else for judgment, including Muslims themselves, shows that the Quran is not singling out Jews and applying to them some harsher and stricter standard than to Muslims or others.

The Just and the Righteous among the Jews

The following two verses of the Quran are in relation to the Jews of the time when the Quran was revealed. This was a time long after their committing of the wrongs in the times of their prophets, as mentioned in the last section of this book*:*

> "And of Moses' people is a party who guide with truth and with it they do justice." — The Quran, 7:159

> "And We divided them in the earth into (different) groups — some of them are righteous and some of them are otherwise. And We tried them with blessings

> and misfortunes that they might turn (i.e. turn towards the truth)." — 7:168

The first verse says that among Jews there is a group, in fact not isolated individuals but a group, who adhere to truth and justice. They actually guide others to the truth as well. The second verse occurs shortly after the first. It speaks of the dispersal of the Jews in the world. This dispersal, both according to the Bible and the Quran, was due to their misdeeds in turning away from the worship of the One God, and becoming worldly and selfish. Yet the Quran tells us that among them some are righteous and some are "otherwise". It says this while at the same time mentioning their wrongdoings and violation of the teachings given to them by God.

This wording, "some of them are righteous and some of them are otherwise", is significant as well. It mentions the righteous first, and then about the rest of them it just says that they were *other than righteous,* and it does not directly apply a pejorative term to them. In these two verses the Quran has shown the utmost fairness and lack of animosity towards the Jews.

Teaching of "pardon them and forgive"

In another place, the Quran first mentions that the Israelites were told by Allah: "I am with you". But this was conditional, and only applied if they remained true believers who did good deeds:

> "And certainly Allah made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We raised up among them twelve chieftains.[1] And Allah said: Surely I am with you.

[1] For the twelve chieftains, see the book of Numbers, 1:5–16. Later in Numbers, 1:44, they are called "the twelve leaders of Israel".

> If you keep up prayer and give the due charity and believe in My messengers and assist them and offer to Allah a goodly gift, I will certainly cover your evil deeds, and make you enter Gardens in which rivers flow. But whoever among you disbelieves after that, he indeed strays from the right way." — 5:12

The next verse says that they broke their side of the promise:

> "But on account of their breaking their covenant We cursed them and hardened their hearts."

However, quite remarkably, the same verse goes on to say to the Prophet Muhammad:

> "You will always discover treachery in them (i.e., breaking their word and promise) except for a few of them — so pardon them and forgive. Surely Allah loves those who do good to others." — 5:13

This is a teaching of justice and mercy, entire lacking any trace of bigotry or hatred. It first makes clear that there are some who do not break their word, but even as regards those who do, the Holy Prophet is himself directed, as a command addressed to him in the singular tense, "to pardon them and forgive", and that this would be an act loved by Allah.

The same teaching is also mentioned in another verse of the Quran (2:109), which says that the Jews of the Holy Prophet's time were envious and jealous of his success. They wanted those Arab idol-worshippers who had become Muslims to go back to their old religion, even while they knew that Islam, like their own Jewish faith, taught the worship of the One God and was against idol-worship. Again, in this situation, the Quran still told Muslims, this time addressing

them in the plural tense, to "pardon and forgive" the Jews for their attempts to make them go back to idol-worship.

These two verses, v. 13 from chapter 5 and v. 109 from chapter 2, both revealed at Madinah, are separated in time by possibly up to five years. Thus the instruction to "pardon and forgive" was given the first time in chapter 2 and then repeated later in chapter 5. Therefore, even those people who believe that some verses of the Quran which were revealed later abrogated earlier verses, cannot argue that this teaching was only temporary and later it was overturned. Far from being overturned, later it was confirmed.

Another mention of fair persons among the Jews

The Quran in another place speaks of a plan by the Jews of Madinah to make Islam appear to be a worthless religion by first becoming Muslims and then quickly leaving Islam (3:72). This was meant to create the impression that they had discovered something wrong with Islam so soon after embracing it, which made them leave Islam. But three verses later the Quran says this:

> "And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a heap of wealth, would pay it back to you; and among them is he who, if you entrust him with a penny, would not pay it back to you, unless you kept on demanding it." — 3:75

The words translated here as "unless you kept on demanding it" are literally: "unless you stood over him". By "People of the Book" here are primarily meant the Jews, since verses before and after it refer to Jews and not any other People of the Book.

By mentioning both kinds of Jews, the Quran has shown remarkable fairness. If the wrongdoings of some of them are described and condemned, the good qualities of others are

also pointed out. Again, the good ones are mentioned first. It says you can rely on the good ones to pay you back a heap of wealth which you had asked them to look after for you. But there are others, even if you gave them a penny or penny's worth of things to look after for you, you would only get it back by persistently asking for it.

Of course, in this verse, entrusting someone with your money is also meant in a broader sense. Your money could also be your rights which belong to you, but which are in the hands of the People of the Book to safeguard for you and give to you when you require them. In that broad sense the verse means that Muslims will encounter some Jews and Christians who will give them their just due rights without any reluctance or resistance, but they will also encounter others who will only do so if Muslims are vigilant and watchful to demand their rights.

Not all alike

A little later after this verse, again while describing the wrongs committed by the Jews against their own prophets, and their opposition to Muslims at the time of the Holy Prophet, the Quran goes on to say:

> "They are not all the same. Among the People of the Book some are upright — they recite Allah's messages in the night-time and they adore (Him). They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin good and forbid evil and hasten in (doing) good deeds. And those are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they will not be denied it. And Allah knows those who keep their duty." — 3:113–115

The very statement "they are not all the same" dispels any idea that the Quran condemns a whole nation or a whole religious community. What do we say when we condemn a

group of people in a blanket way? We say: They ***are*** all the same! Moreover, since the condemnation in the Quran is directed at misdeeds and wrongs that were committed, it goes on here to mention the good deeds that they ought to commit and which some of them do commit. (In a similar context in 5:66 we read: "Some of them keep to the moderate course".)

Reciting Allah's messages here does not mean reading the Quran but receiving inspiration from their own scriptures that were revealed by God. This point, and all the other good points listed here, are possible for the "People of the Book" to do while following their own religions. They can adore God, and passages enabling them to adore God can be found readily in the Bible. They can believe in God and the Last Day, as indeed required by their own scriptures. They know what good and evil are, and it is very similar to the concepts of good and evil as held by Muslims.

The last verse of the above passage again removes any idea of prejudice against and hatred towards a whole nation: "And whatever good they do, they will not be denied it". When they do the good deeds required by their own scriptures, which are corroborated by the Quran as being good deeds, they shall not be denied reward for those deeds by Allah.

Fighting to preserve synagogues

In the Quran, Allah allowed Muslims to fight in their self-defence. It says in that passage that if Allah did not allow people to fight other people to repel their attacks then the consequences would have been that:

> "… cloisters (i.e., monks' places of worship) and churches and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down." — 22:40

This verse shows that it is necessary and required in Islam to preserve all such places of worship and save them from destruction. As can be seen, Jewish synagogues are included here.

No conversion to Islam without consent

There is another interesting incident relating to the revelation of the well-known verse of the Quran:

> "There is no compulsion in religion." — 2:256

Among the Arabs of Madinah there was a custom, before Islam, that sometimes they would bring up their children in the Jewish faith, because they considered it to be superior to their own ancestral religion. When Islam came, and such parents began to embrace the new faith, they wanted to convert their children to Islam as well. Then this verse was revealed to say that no one could be forced to convert to Islam. If the children wanted to continue to adhere to the Jewish religion, in which they had been brought up, they had the right to do so, according to the Quran. In fact, some of them did wish to remain with the Jews, and did so.

Incidents from the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad

In his practical example, the Holy Prophet Muhammad treated Jews with the same humanity and courtesy that he showed to anyone else. We quote some such incidents below.

1. There is a report in Bukhari as follows:

> "A funeral procession passed by us and the Prophet stood up for it, and we too stood up with him. We said: 'Messenger of Allah! This is the funeral procession of a Jew.' He said: 'Whenever you see a funeral procession, stand up'." [2]

[2] Bukhari, book 23: 'Funerals', ch. 49, hadith 1311.

The next report relates that, at a time after the Muslim conquest of the Iranian empire, two Companions of the Holy Prophet were once sitting in a street in the city of Al-Qadisiya (in modern-day Iraq) when what happened was this:

> "A funeral procession passed by them, so they stood up. They were told that the funeral procession was of one of the local inhabitants, that is, from among non-Muslims living under the protection of the Muslims (*ahl adh-dhimmah*). They replied: A funeral procession passed by the Prophet and he stood up. When he was told that it was the funeral of a Jew, he said: 'Is it not a human soul?' " [3]

The words of the Holy Prophet in Arabic were just three: *A laisat nafs-an?* — "Is it not a human soul?" The chapter in Sahih Bukhari in which these two reports are contained is headed: "The one who stands for the funeral of a Jew".

Both these reports are also in Sahih Muslim, thus occurring in the two most authentic Hadith collections.[4] In the same chapter in Sahih Muslim there is also a statement as follows:

> "The Prophet and his Companions kept standing for the funeral procession of a Jew until the coffin disappeared from view."

2. The Holy Prophet had a wife belonging to a Jewish tribe, whose name was Safiyyah. Also Hafsah, daughter of his close Companion Hazrat Umar, was a wife of the Holy Prophet from his own tribe of the Quraish. Once Hafsah described Safiyyah as "daughter of a Jew". What then happened is reported in the collection of Tirmidhi as follows:

[3] Bukhari, hadith 1312 of the last reference.

[4] Sahih Muslim, book 11: 'Funerals', ch. 24, hadith 960 and 961.

> "The news reached Safiyyah that Hafsah said: 'The daughter of a Jew', so she wept. Then the Prophet came to her while she was crying, so he said: 'What makes you cry?' She said: 'Hafsah said to me that I am the daughter of a Jew.' So the Prophet said: 'And you are the daughter of a Prophet (meaning Aaron), and your uncle is a Prophet (meaning Moses), and you are married to a Prophet, so what is she boasting to you about?' Then he said (to Hafsah): 'Fear Allah, O Hafsah'." [5]

Another version of this report is from Safiyyah herself, who relates that she told the Holy Prophet that his wives Hazrat Aishah and Hazrat Hafsah (daughters of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Umar, respectively) had said about her:

> " 'We are more honoured by the Messenger of Allah than her' and 'We are the wives of the Prophet and his cousins.' "

Upon this, the Holy Prophet said to Safiyyah:

> "Why did you not say (to them): How can you be better than me when my husband is Muhammad, my father is Aaron, and my uncle is Moses?" [6]

The Holy Prophet was advising Safiyyah to tell Hafsah and Aishah (God be pleased with them all) that she was related to three prophets, to two of them by descent and to one by marriage, while they were related to only one prophet!

3. There is another incident reported by Hazrat Aishah herself as follows:

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[5] Tirmidhi, book 49: 'Virtues', ch. 64, hadith 3894.

[6] *Ibid.,* hadith 3892.

> "The camel of Safiyyah was fatigued, and Zainab had a surplus mount. The Messenger of Allah said to Zainab: 'Give her the camel.' She said: 'Should I give to that Jewess?' Thereupon the Messenger of Allah became angry and kept away from her during (the months of) *Dhu al-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram,* and a part of *Ṣafar.*" [7]

The two events mentioned above show that the Holy Prophet Muhammad severely disapproved of insulting Jews and he reprimanded his own followers, and even his own wives, for insulting them.

4. There is another incident reported in Sahih Bukhari more than half a dozen times. One version is as follows:

> "Two men, a Muslim and a Jew, quarrelled. The Muslim said (as an oath): 'By Him (i.e., God) Who gave Muhammad superiority over all the people!' The Jew responded (with the oath): 'By Him Who gave Moses superiority over all the people!' At this the Muslim raised his hand and slapped the Jew on the face. The Jew went to the Prophet and informed him of what had happened between him and the Muslim. The Prophet sent for the Muslim and asked him about it. The Muslim informed him of the event. The Prophet said (to the Muslim): **Do not give me superiority over Moses.**" [8]

According to another version, it was the Jew who started the dispute:

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[7] Abu Dawud, book 42: *Al-Sunnah,* hadith 4602.

[8] Bukhari, book 44: Disputes, ch. 1, hadith 2411; see also hadith 2412. See also: book 60: Prophets, ch. 31, hadith 3408; book 81: *Al-Riqāq,* ch. 43, hadith 6517; and book 97: *Tauhīd,* ch. 31, hadith 7472.

> "Once while a Jew was selling something, he was offered a price that he was not pleased with. So he said: 'No, by Him Who gave Moses superiority over all mortals!' Hearing him, a man from among the Ansar got up and slapped him on the face and said: 'You say, By Him Who gave Moses superiority over all mortals, while the Prophet (Muhammad) is present amongst us!'
>
> The Jew went to the Prophet and said: 'O Abu-l-Qasim! I am under the assurance and contract of security (with you), so what right does so-and-so have to slap me?' The Prophet asked (the Muslim): 'Why have you slapped him?' He told him the whole story.
>
> The Prophet became angry, till anger showed on his face. Then he said: **Do not give superiority to any prophet amongst Allah's Prophets.**" [9]

This incident is repeated in so many versions in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim that it is absolutely certain that this story is authentic and true.

Let us remember that this took place under a Muslim state in Madinah, whose Head of state was the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Jews were living under the protection of that Muslim state. That is why this Jew took his complaint to the Holy Prophet, and he had confidence in the Holy Prophet that he would do justice. The dispute in the incident involved the status of the Holy Prophet himself. The Holy Prophet told the Muslim that he should not have said what he did. Of course, this does not mean that the Holy Prophet is telling Muslims not

[9] Bukhari, book 60: Prophets, ch. 35, h. 3414–5. See also book 65: Commentary on the Quran, under *Sūrah* 7, hadith 4638; and book 87: *Al-Diyāt,* ch. 32, hadith 6917.

to regard him as superior to all other prophets. What it means is that his superiority cannot be established by having this kind of dispute, which leads to a Muslim losing control and striking the other person.

5. The Holy Prophet Muhammad was directed in the Quran to judge between people with justice and never to support the dishonest, whoever they may be. It says to him:

> "Surely We have revealed the Book to you (O Prophet) with truth that you may judge between people by means of what Allah has taught you. And do not be one pleading the cause of the dishonest, and ask the forgiveness of Allah. Surely Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful. And do not contend on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls. Surely Allah does not love him who is treacherous, sinful." — 4:105–107

Commentators of the Quran agree that these verses were revealed when the Holy Prophet was to deliver judgment between a Muslim and a Jew.[10] A Muslim, Ṭa'mah ibn Ubairaq, stole a piece of armour from another Muslim. The latter suspected him of the theft and went to the Holy Prophet to accuse him of it. Ṭa'mah hid the item in the house of a Jew and accused him of the theft.

In making this false accusation, Ṭa'mah was supported by the whole of his clan. The Jew proclaimed his innocence. Ṭa'mah and his clan argued that, as the Jew was a non-believer in Islam, his word could not be trusted, whereas they were Muslims who could be trusted. It is said that the Holy Prophet was about to rule in favour of the Muslim when he received the

[10] Maulana Abul Ala Maudoodi's explanation is well worth reading in his commentary of the Quran, *Tafhīm-ul-Quran,* under 4:105.

above revelation, informing him that the Muslim's case was "the cause of the dishonest" and the Muslim side were acting "unfaithfully to their souls" and being "treacherous, sinful" ones. The Holy Prophet cleared the Jew of the false charge of theft, despite the risk of antagonising a whole tribe of Muslims at a time when every Muslim was sorely needed for the defence of Islam against its enemies.

In the verses which follow the above quotation, those who make false allegations against others, as the Muslim was making against the Jews, and those support them in the false allegations, are bitterly condemned in these words:

> "They seek to hide from people and they cannot hide from Allah, … Look! You are they who may contend on their behalf in this world's life, but who will contend with Allah on their behalf on the day of Resurrection, or who will have charge of their affairs? … And whoever commits a fault or a sin, then accuses of it one innocent, he indeed takes upon himself the burden of a slander and a manifest sin." — 4:108–109, 112

6. Another incident reported in Hadith is as follows. A Jewish scholar had lent some money to the Holy Prophet. Later he came to demand it back. The Holy Prophet said: "I have no money that I can give you." He said: "Muhammad, I will not leave from here until you pay what you owe me." The Holy Prophet said: "All right, I will stay with you."

So the Holy Prophet remained with him through the *Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib* and *Isha* prayers, and the next morning's *Fajr* prayers. His Companions were annoyed and they told the Jew that they would throw him out. But the Holy Prophet stopped them. They said: "O Messenger of Allah, Can a Jew hold you up?" He said:

> "Allah has forbidden me to do injustice to anyone who is under our compact of security, and such people."

Later that morning, the Jew suddenly said:

> "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah. I give a half of my property in the way of Allah. I swear by Allah that I did what I did only because I was testing you to see if the qualities that are recorded in the Torah about the promised prophet are found in you or not. The Torah says: … He will not be abusive in language nor hard-hearted, nor will he shout loudly in the streets, nor will he indulge in foul talk." [11]

The Holy Prophet here affirmed that Jews were living under his rule with security guaranteed to them through an agreement with them. So he granted them their full rights and treated them with justice, kindness and tolerance.

It is therefore absolutely clear and categorical from the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad that Islam rejects antisemitism in every form, including use of sarcastic and hurtful language towards Jews.

We hope that the wider world and Muslims themselves come to realise that Islam set the highest standards of civilisation, behaviour and human rights in how Muslims should treat followers of other faiths!

[11] Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ, *Kitāb-ul-Fitan,* ch. 'Morals and habits of the Holy Prophet', sec. 3.

6. Imam of main British Mosque at Woking denounces anti-Jewish fascism in 1939

The Mosque at Woking in Surrey, England, served as the national centre of Islam in the UK for some fifty-five years, from 1913 to the mid-1960s. The Imam of the Mosque was regarded by the press and government as the representative of Muslim opinion in Britain. During these years a monthly magazine, *The Islamic Review,* was published from the Mosque.

In *The Islamic Review* issue of March 1940, a letter to the Imam from a British reader is published which, among other comments and questions, asks the Imam:

> "I am a member of the British Union (Leader, Sir Oswald Mosley); is this party compatible with Islam?" [1]

The British Union was a fascist party which was anti-semitic and supported Hitler's Nazi ideology.

The reply by the Imam, Abdul Majid, almost two pages in length, is nearly all devoted to answering this question.[2] We reproduce his answer below, in which we have highlighted certain parts in italics.

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[1] The letter is dated 3 November 1939 and occupies the whole of p. 118.

[2] The reply is dated 7 November 1939 and occupies pp. 119–120.

"You wish to know if your membership of the British Union, whose Leader is Sir Oswald Mosley, is compatible with the teachings of Islam. Now, in reply to this, I write to say that I can only give some guiding principles as enunciated by Islam, leaving it for you to decide the issue. Islamic polity is controlled by certain guiding principles. The first and the most important is that God has no associates neither in His essence nor in His attributes and the stress laid upon this by Islam can be best understood when we remember that though we are expressly asked in the Quran to obey our parents implicitly it is enjoined upon us to disobey them at the risk of their displeasure, if they ever invited us to polytheism (the Quran, 17:23).

The second, as a corollary to the foregoing, teaches us to remember that all human beings are equal both spiritually and morally and are equal before the eyes of law. Even a king forms no exception. We Muslims do not believe in the myth which is embodied in the sentence "the king can do no wrong." The Quran, consequently, teaches us that everything in the world is created by God for the service of man.

The third principle is that there should be no compulsion in matters religious (the Quran, 2:256); *there should be absolute freedom of conscience and no one is to be persecuted because of his religious persuasions.*

God alone is the source of our moral conduct; it is His attributes that are our watchword. Our Prophet Muhammad once said: "Imbue yourselves with the Divine Attributes;" that is to say, take Him for your prototype. According to Islam it is God who is the ruler and the chief of the world. His Will is the source of all legislation in Islam. Have we ever seen God making any distinction in

the dispensation of His favours between a white and a black? *We, therefore, have no right to be intolerant towards others or assume haughty airs towards those who do not belong to the same faith as we do* or have not the same colour of skin as we have.

Now Nazism, as I understand it, is absolutely opposed to these fundamentals — the source of all conduct and legislation in Islam. *The present-day legislation in Germany is inspired by racial discrimination and religious distinctions. It, to begin with, believes in racial superiority, it believes in exiling people for their religious opinions. It has actually pulled down synagogues.* I have no idea if these are the aims of the British Union. In case they are, then there can be no two opinions on the matter. *Islam has come to establish in reality the Brotherhood of Man which is the imperative need of the present-day world. Enough of dissensions. Let us talk of ways enabling us to treat each other as brothers and members of one family.*

To illustrate further the foregoing I cite to you the case of the Jews. I know the Jew is inassimilable and that there are many who believe that the present-day troubles are due to the financial machinations and control of the affairs of the world by the Jews. *I need hardly point out to you that such statements are sweeping. It is not all the Jews who are guilty. There are good and honest Jews too. Why should they suffer for the misdeeds of their co-religionists?*

As a Muslim, I would not persecute the whole community for the crime of the few; I would not exile the Jews bag and baggage in punishment of the few guilty ones. I would try instead to bring about changes in our economic system without persecuting the Jews as Jews. When you and I wish to introduce desired reforms in our own

midst, we try to restrict the activities of such as obstruct our reforms and jeopardise their existence. A discrimination is made on the basis of the crime but not on the basis of the race or religion. Only those are made to suffer penalty who harm the interests of society; only those are brought to book who create trouble. *It is not only inhuman and unjust, it is also irreligious to condemn a person because of his race or religion.* In Islam there is no colour distinction*; in Islam religious differences are not regarded as synonymous with lack of the existence of truth or goodness in those who are not Muslims.* The Quran says: "Every one who does good shall have reward from his Lord" (2:62; 5:48). The duty of a Muslim ends with his having pointed out to a non-Muslim the error in his belief."

This reply was written before the persecution of Jews by Nazi Germany had reached the atrocious extent of the Holocaust and their mass, state-organised extermination. The Imam has here thoroughly condemned Germany's discriminatory legislation and actions against the Jews for being Jews, he has declared it as "absolutely opposed" to the very fundamentals of Islam, and stated that "there can be no two opinions on the matter".

What makes the Imam's strong and clear stand-point even more remarkable is that at that time there was widespread antisemitism among the British people. Those British newspapers which today are prominent in supporting the state of Israel, and denouncing instances of antisemitism, were at that time in 1939 opposed to allowing persecuted Jews from Germany to enter the UK.

Imam's address at the *Eid-ul-Fitr* prayers

The same issue of *The Islamic Review* (March 1940) carries a report of the *Eid-ul-Fitr* function held at the Woking Mosque on 13 November 1939.[3] In his address or sermon (*khutba*) the Imam, towards the end, dealt with the teachings of Islam regarding the three kinds of objects for which Muslims are permitted to go to war. The third of these objects, the one which the Imam emphasised, was, in his words:

> "To enable every person to follow his religious convictions, to whatever persuasion he may belong." [4]

He went on to say:

> "Islam came to establish freedom of conscience and action in general but particularly in religion. A Muslim is bound to wage war against any person, whether of his own kith and kin and religion or not, who interferes with the beliefs of a non-Muslim. … It is to be noted that Muslims are ordered to sacrifice their lives not only to save their own mosques but the religious houses of other peoples as well." [5]

Applying this principle, the Imam ends his sermon as follows:

> "What should be the attitude of us Muslims towards the present war? In view of the above remarks, our duty as Muslims is quite clear. … We Muslims have suffered much at the hands of the French and the British. Fate had thrown us into the arms of

[3] For a report of that function, see *The Islamic Review,* February 1940, pp. 42–44.

[4] *The Islamic Review,* March 1940, p. 96.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 97.

> one another. Clashes and injustices were perhaps only natural.
>
> The Zionist policy in Palestine has done us great harm. Untold miseries has it brought upon our brethren in the faith in that country. **But the very fact that synagogues have been pulled down in Germany upon the slightest pretext makes it obligatory upon us Muslims to throw our weight into the cause of the Allies.**[6]
>
> The Allies may be fighting for the defence of democracy and we Muslims possibly may not agree with the definition or the signification attached to that word by European diplomats. Nevertheless, in the present circumstances, our attitude is quite clear. Unless and until religious liberty is restored, no Muslim should think that he has done his duty." [7]

Having quoted the above extracts, we declare with the fullest confidence that at that time when this sermon was delivered it would have been *rare to find anyone among the general British population and its leaders of opinion* who regarded it as their duty, their moral religious obligation, to fight for the protection of synagogues and religious freedom of Jews in Germany.

[6] The bolding of this text is ours.

[7] *The Islamic Review,* March 1940, p. 98.

7. Supporters of the state of Israel in the West

The vast majority of the supporters of the modern state of Israel in Western countries fall into three categories. The first, and possibly the largest, category consists of those who reject all religion. They have no belief in God or in the Bible. Far from honouring the prophets of Israel, as Muslims do, they hold that either these holy personages never existed and their lives are mere fiction, or that if they existed their claims of revelation from God were based on falsehood or delusions, and they intended to deceive their followers. Of course, they have the fullest right to hold and proclaim these beliefs about how all religions originated. It does, however, mean that while supporting the Jewish state of Israel they regard the Jewish religion as false and based on ignorance and superstition.

The second category consists of mainstream Christians. They believe, as a fundamental creed, that Jesus Christ was the only sinless being ever to exist. As a basic plank of this creed, they portray the prophets of the Jews as sinners who committed the most depraved acts of gross immorality. They delight in highlighting these alleged misdeeds, of murder, deceit and sexual misbehaviour, in order to prove the exclusive sinlessness and superiority of Jesus. In contrast, Muslims are taught by the Quran to believe as a fundamental of their religion that all the prophets of the Jews were thoroughly righteous and entirely innocent of sin.

Evangelical Christians

The third category is that of evangelical Christians, quite prominent in the USA, who are looking forward to the second coming of Jesus. There was an interview in the publication *European Affairs* in 2007 on this subject[1] with an American-Israeli author, journalist and newspaper columnist Zev Chafets.[2] The title of this article is: *Israel's Most Devoted Ally: U.S. Evangelical Christians.* In the introduction to the interview with Zev Chafets, Christian evangelicals are described as having "unwavering — indeed, unquestioning — loyalty to Israel". Their core belief is that:

> "the return of Jews to Israel is part of God's unfolding design for Jesus to return, an event triggering the battle of Armageddon, mass conversion to Christianity and the end of the world … ironically a view that in earlier decades often put evangelicals at odds with Jews, sometimes in anti-Semitic ways".

The introduction also says:

> "Some Jews remain suspicious of evangelicals' intentions because they see the evangelicals working for the Second Coming of Jesus and the battle of Armageddon as the signal for mass conversion, including of Jews, to Christianity."

[1] *European Affairs,* v. 8, no. 1, Spring 2007: *Israel's Most Devoted Ally: U.S. Evangelical Christians.* Internet link: https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/olj/ea/2007_spring/n.html

[2] He is introduced in the interview as an "American-Israeli who has held senior positions in successive conservative Israeli governments". His books have won several awards in the USA. He was also Director of the Government Press Office in Israel during 1977–1982.

Zev Chafets himself says that the evangelicals' commitment to Israel:

> "is unquestioning. It comes from a religious conviction. … they see the country simply as the land where God sent his son and where he will reappear…"

He goes on to say:

> "President [George W.] Bush personally is an evangelical who shares the special reverence for Israel. … People cite President Bush, who says he is acting to fulfill God's will. That's what he says and, I think, believes."

Jews who reject evangelical Christians

The evangelical belief that Jews should convert to Christianity, and indeed that they will do so *en masse* in Israel when Jesus returns to this world, has infuriated many Jews. There is a Jewish newspaper in the USA by the name of *Forward,* which describes itself as a weekly whose "unparalleled coverage of Jewish arts, culture and opinion have made it the most influential nationwide Jewish media outlet today".[3] In November 2013 it published an opinion article by a Rabbi, David Wolpe, entitled *Why Jews Should Not Accept Jesus — Whatever George W. Bush Thinks.*[4] Under a photograph of the former President standing with an evangelical pastor, the caption says about Mr Bush: "There's nothing wrong with him expressing his Christian faith, but why should he encourage Jews to leave theirs?"

David Wolpe first discusses why Jews cannot accept Christian teachings. He mentions one such teaching as follows:

[3] See the link: https://forward.com/about-us/

[4] See the link: https://forward.com/opinion/187446/why-jews-should-not-accept-jesus-whatever-george/

> "The idea that eternal punishment would follow from rejecting Jesus seems downright evil. That someone could live a noble life and not be saved, when another could live a depraved and cruel life and through a true conversion of his heart at the end of life still be saved, is hard to tote up on the moral balance sheet."

To this he adds the following as a possible example:

> "A Nazi on his deathbed repents and goes to heaven and Anne Frank to hell?"

The learned Rabbi has clearly stated here that, according to the Christian church doctrine, *Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities, who died as Jews, are doomed to eternal hell, but the door to heaven remained open for their persecutors if they should choose to acknowledge belief in the church doctrines.*

This may be an extreme example of the application of the Christian doctrine but as the Rabbi points out: "for centuries it was normative church doctrine and still endures among a large number of Christians". This doctrine is adhered to, at least on paper, by the most staunch of the supporters of the modern state of Israel, the evangelical Christians of the USA.

Rabbi Wolpe then refers to the atrocities of the Christians committed against the Jews in Europe over a period of centuries and writes that this makes it "difficult to see certain aspects of Christian history in its historical garb in anything but a dark, forbidding light." About the Holocaust he writes:

> "The chronicle of Christian antisemitism is one of the most gruesome, disheartening chapters in the human story. Even the most abominable tragedy, the systematic slaughter of millions in World War II, the Holocaust, cannot be entirely separated from centuries of

> Christian teachings of the abjectness of the Jew. As the theologian Elieser Berkowitz put it, the Nazis who killed Jews may not have been Christians, but they were all the sons and daughters of Christians."

David Wolpe's most telling comment is his agreement with the opinion of the Polish-American Rabbi, theologian and philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel. Wolpe writes:

> "As Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote about attempts to convert the Jews:
>
> > 'How can we take seriously a friendship that is conditioned ultimately on the hope and expectation that the Jew will disappear? How would a Christian feel if we Jews were engaged in an effort to bring about the liquidation of Christianity?' "

Here we have the views of two Rabbis of the USA questioning how these most ardent supporters of the state of Israel can be friends of the Jews whom they want to cease to remain Jews.

Fate of Israel *if* Christians evangelicals were right

We see that the most staunch supporters of the modern state of Israel in the USA are looking forward to a time when the Jews who have returned to Israel are no longer Jews. To make the Jews disappear, and be liquidated as members of the religion of their birth, is their hope, aim and objective in supporting the establishment of the state of Israel. If their dream were actually to be fulfilled, Israel would no longer be a "Jewish" state as there would be no Jew living in it!

The beliefs of the pro-Israel Christian movements, as expressed for example by the 'One for Israel' group, a charity based in Israel, are that after his second coming, "Jesus will

rule and reign from Jerusalem, and no one will be able to oppose Him … when Jesus returns, the world will but run by His rules, and He will punish the wicked to keep them in line." [5] Plain commonsense shows that, for this to happen, the present state of Israel and its governmental institutions would have to be permanently dismantled and demolished.

Foreign policy decided by scriptural prophecies!

In 2020, when the President of the USA, Donald Trump, formally recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, an article entitled *Why is Jerusalem so important to American Evangelical Christians?* appeared in the UK newspaper *The Independent,* explaining the reasons for this. We quote below from it: [6]

> Donald Trump told supporters in Oshkosh, Wisconsin on Monday that he formally recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved the US Embassy there for the benefit of his evangelical Christian supporters.
>
> "And we moved the capital of Israel to Jerusalem," he said. "That's for the evangelicals."
>
> "You know, it's amazing with that — the evangelicals are more excited by that than Jewish people," Mr Trump said.
>
> From the outside, it may appear that evangelical Christian enthusiasm over Mr Trump's decision is rooted in support for the Israeli government and its

[5] See the article *Is Biblical Prophecy Coming True?* at the link: https://www.oneforisrael.org/bible-based-teaching-from-israel/is-biblical-prophecy-coming-true/

[6] *Independent,* 18 August 2020. See the link: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/jerusalem-history-explained-religion-evangelical-christians-donald-trump-a9676756.html

> longstanding battle with the people of Palestine over land rights, but in truth, Christian support of Israel is rooted in theology rather than politics. …
>
> Israel is also important to evangelical eschatology because they believe it will be home to the final battle of good against evil in which God obliterates his enemies and ushers in the millennial reign of Christ."

We may point out here that it is not only evangelical Christians, but also a large number of Muslims who are looking forward to the return of Jesus to this world to lead them to a victory in war. In case of those Muslims who hold this belief, they say that he will descend in Damascus and will be joined by the Mahdi with his forces. If the United States can allow its foreign policy to be determined according to the beliefs of the evangelical Christians, in order to please and satisfy these groups, then it cannot object to a Muslim country's government setting its policies to satisfy those Islamic groups which believe that Jesus will return to fight for Muslims!

The Quran's rational teachings on religious differences

In contrast with this, the sane and sensible teaching of the Quran is that differences among religions in general, with particular reference to differences of belief between Jews, Christians and Muslims, *will remain till the end of this world and will only be settled by God in the life after death.* Here are a few quotations from the Quran:

> "For everyone of you [nations] We appointed a law and a way. And if Allah had pleased He would have made you a single people, but that He might try you in what He gave you. So vie with one another in good works. To Allah you will all return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed." — 5:48

> "Those who believe [i.e., Muslims] and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and those who set up partners [with Allah] — surely Allah will decide between them on the day of Resurrection." — 22:17

> "And the Jews say, The Christians have no sound basis [for their beliefs], and the Christians say, The Jews have no sound basis, while they recite the [same] Book. … So Allah will judge between them on the day of Resurrection in that in which they differ." — 2:113

It is thus abundantly clear that the various kinds of Western supporters of the modern state of Israel, whom we have covered in this section, are antagonistic and hostile to the Jewish religion. Whether they are non-religious people, atheists, agnostics, mainstream Christians or evangelical Christians, they have no respect for the prophets and the religion of the Jews. They would rather have the Jewish religious traditions and their sacred figures consigned to the dustbin of history.

As against their attitude, it is the scripture of the Muslims which is respectful of the Jewish religious traditions, adopts a moderate and rational approach, and treats Jews with justice and humanity. In the end only the Quran will triumph and will be proved to be correct as well as beneficial to humanity as a whole.

Part II:
Muslims help Jews under persecution

Jewish Testimonies

Note: In Part II, the notes to each of the two sections (8 and 9) are given together at the end of that section.

8. Ottoman Turkey gives shelter to Jews of Spain

The Jews of Spain

The period of Jewish history under Muslim rule of Spain for 700 years, from the 8th to the 15th century C.E., is widely known as the Golden Age of Jewish history. The Jewish Heritage Alliance describes it as follows:

> "The golden age of Jewish culture in Spain coincided with the Middle Ages in Europe, a period when Muslims ruled much of the Iberian Peninsula. In the 8th century, the Berber Muslims (Moors) swiftly conquered nearly all of the Iberian Peninsula. … Jews rose to great prominence in society, business, and government. The Jews flourished in business, fields of astronomy, philosophy, math, science, medicine, and religious study." [1]

Jocelyn Hellig, who had been an academic in religious studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, and is the author of a book, *The Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Short History,* wrote in a paper in 1982:

> "… the Jews in Spain experienced relative freedom and toleration under Muslim rule. Many Jews became wealthy and influential. Several gained high positions in the administrative field, while others reached great heights in scientific, medical, literary, linguistic and

> philosophic achievement. The Jewish golden age was given its impetus and opportunity by the brilliance of Muslim culture of the time. Under the caliphate of Abd ar-Rahman III (891-961) no branch of learning was left unadorned. No art or craft was neglected. Cordoba became an important cultural capital of the Muslim world… No people was more ready to absorb and transmit this culture than the Jews." [2]

Expulsion of Jews from Spain

As Spain began to be re-conquered by the Christians from Muslim rule, the Christian rulers began a campaign of severe persecution of Jews and Muslims. Hundreds of thousands of Jews converted to Catholicism to save themselves. According to the Jewish Heritage Alliance: "The forced conversion of a quarter-million Jews in Spain was, in spiritual terms, a Holocaust never equaled in the long exile of the Jewish people." [3]

Those who remained Jews were expelled from Spain by law. As soon as the last Muslim kingdom, that in Granada, was defeated by the Catholic monarchs of Spain in January 1492, they issued what is known as the Alhambra Decree in March of that year, expelling all Jews from Spain. An article on the website of the Museum of Jewish Heritage gives the following details:

> "In 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella issued the Alhambra Decree, ordering the expulsion of all Jews from their kingdoms. In a matter of months, Spanish Jews were forced to renounce their faith or leave their thousand-year homeland behind. … Spanish Jews, who numbered around 300,000, were required to emigrate or convert to Catholicism by the end of July the same year, giving them a period of four

> months to liquidate all of their property, vacate their homes and businesses, and venture abroad. … Within the year, 175,000 Jews left Spain, while those who stayed were forced to renounce their faith. The Jewish presence in Spain was virtually extinguished for the next several hundred years." [4]

This was the same time as the King and Queen of Spain sent Christopher Columbus on his famous journey in discovery of America. The Jewish Virtual Library, in its article *The Spanish Expulsion (1492),* quotes Columbus from his diary:

> "In the same month in which their Majesties [Ferdinand and Isabella] issued the edict that all Jews should be driven out of the kingdom and its territories, in the same month they gave me the order to undertake with sufficient men my expedition of discovery to the Indies." [5]

The same article goes on to report:

> "Tens of thousands of refugees died while trying to reach safety. In some instances, Spanish ship captains charged Jewish passengers exorbitant sums, then dumped them overboard in the middle of the ocean. In the last days before the expulsion, rumors spread throughout Spain that the fleeing refugees had swallowed gold and diamonds, and many Jews were knifed to death by brigands hoping to find treasures in their stomachs. …
>
> … when the Spanish Army defeated Muslim forces in Granada, thereby restoring the whole of Spain to Christian rule … the king and queen concluded that the Jews were expendable. On March 30, they issued the expulsion decree, the order to take effect in precisely

> four months. The short time span was a great boon to the rest of Spain, as the Jews were forced to liquidate their homes and businesses at absurdly low prices."

It concludes: "Of the dozens of expulsions directed against Jews throughout their history, the one from Spain remains the most infamous." It was only in December 1968 that the "Alhambra Decree was officially overturned at the Second Vatican Council". We may note that this was after more than two-thirds of the 20th century had passed and a few months before humans landed on the moon.

In another article at the Jewish Virtual Library, *Turkish Jewish History Tour,* this event is reported as follows:

> "At midnight on August 2, 1492, when Columbus embarked on what would become his most famous expedition to the New World, his fleet departed from the relatively unknown seaport of Palos because the shipping lanes of Cadiz and Seville were clogged with Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain by the Edict of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain. The Jews were forced either to convert to Christianity or to "leave" the country under menace "they dare not return... not so much as to take a step on them". … They left their land, their property, their belongings all that was theirs and familiar to them rather than abandon their beliefs, their traditions, their heritage." [6]

Escaping Jews find refuge in Turkey

The first article quoted above, *The Spanish Expulsion (1492),* goes on to record:

> "The most fortunate of the expelled Jews succeeded in escaping to Turkey. Sultan Bajazet welcomed them warmly. 'How can you call Ferdinand of Aragon a wise

> king,' he was fond of asking, 'the same Ferdinand who impoverished his own land and enriched ours?' Among the most unfortunate refugees were those who fled to neighboring Portugal." [7]

In other words, to escape the persecution imposed on them in a Christian-ruled country, it was far preferable for the Jews to seek shelter in a distant Muslim land than in the Christian country next door.

According to Jane S. Gerber, in her book *The Jews of Spain*:

> "He [Sultan Bayazid II] not only welcomed Sephardic exiles but ordered his provincial government to assist the wanderers by opening the borders. Indeed, the refugees would find the Ottoman state to be powerful, generous, and tolerant." [8]

The second article cited above, *Turkish Jewish History Tour,* [9] continues as follows:

> "In the faraway Ottoman Empire, one ruler — Sultan Bayazid II — extended an immediate welcome to the persecuted Jews of Spain, the Sephardim."

Even before the time of this Sultan, who lived from 1447–1512, Jews had found shelter in the Ottoman empire. This article gives the following details about it:

> "[After their pre-Islamic establishment] Jewish communities in Anatolia flourished and continued to prosper through the Turkish conquest. When the Ottomans captured Bursa in 1324 and made it their capital, they found a Jewish community oppressed under Byzantine rule. The Jews welcomed the Ottomans as saviors. Sultan Orhan permitted them to build

> the *Etz ha-Hayyim* (Tree of Life) synagogue, which remained in service until 50 years ago.
>
> Early in the 14th century, when the Ottomans had established their capital at Edirne, Jews from Europe, including Karaites, migrated there. Similarly, Jews expelled from Hungary in 1376, from France by Charles VI in September 1394, and from Sicily early in the 15th century found refuge in the Ottoman Empire. In the 1420s, Jews from Salonika, then under Venetian control, fled to Edirne.
>
> When Mehmet II, "the Conqueror," took Constantinople in 1453, he encountered an oppressed Romaniot (Byzantine) Jewish community which welcomed him with enthusiasm. Sultan Mehmet II proclaimed to all Jews *"... to ascend the site of the Imperial Throne, to dwell in the best of the land, each beneath his vine and his fig tree, with silver and with gold, with wealth and with cattle..."*
>
> In 1475, Jews expelled from Bavaria by Ludwig IX found refuge in the Ottoman Empire."

As to the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492, the article continues under the subheading *A Haven for Sephardic Jews* as follows:

> "Sultan Bayezid II's offer of refuge gave new hope to the persecuted Sephardim [i.e. Spanish Jews]. In 1492, the Sultan ordered the governors of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire *"not to refuse the Jews entry or cause them difficulties, but to receive them cordially."* According to Bernard Lewis, *"the Jews were not just permitted to settle in the Ottoman lands, but were encouraged, assisted and sometimes even compelled."* [10]

Speaking of later times, the article adds:

> "Over the centuries, many European Jews, escaping persecution in their native countries, settled in the Ottoman Empire. In 1537, the Jews were expelled from Apulia (Italy) after the city fell under Papal control; in 1542, those expelled from Bohemia by King Ferdinand found a haven in the Ottoman Empire. In March of 1556, Sultan Suleyman "the Magnificent" wrote a letter to Pope Paul IV asking for the immediate release of the Ancona Marranos, which he declared Ottoman citizens. The pope had no other alternative than to release them, the Ottoman Empire being the "Superpower" of those days. …
>
> For 300 years following the expulsion, the prosperity and creativity of the Ottoman Jews rivaled that of the Golden Age of Spain. Istanbul, Izmir, Safed, and Salonica became the centers of Sephardic Jewry."

It cites examples showing that "Most of the court physicians were Jews", "Jews often carried out Ottoman diplomacy" and "In the free air of the Ottoman Empire, Jewish literature flourished".

Jane S. Gerber in her book *The Jews of Spain,* cited above, notes that Jewish historians of those times wrote that the Ottoman policies of granting shelter in their kingdom to persecuted Jews from elsewhere were a part of God's plan. Referring to the Jewish historian and Rabbi Elijah Capsali, she writes:

> "Capsali, in particular, discerned special redemptive portents in this unprecedented Islamic largesse and compared the Turkish leaders to the ancient Persian Cyrus, who had invited the Jewish exiles in Babylon to

> return to the land of Israel. He confidently described the working of God's will in the decisions made by Islamic rulers."

She then quotes Capsali as writing in his book *Seder Eliyahu Zutta* that it was God Who "aroused the spirit of the king, Sultan Mehmet, King of Turkey" to proclaim through his kingdom that God had commanded him "to give them [i.e., the Jews] sustenance in the land and to provide a safe haven to them", and that therefore they should come and "settle in the land and trade and become part of it." [11]

"Blood libel" banned by the Ottoman Sultan

In 1840 an event took place under Ottoman rule known as the Damascus Affair. Some Jews in the city were charged with killing a Christian monk, Father Thomas, and his servant. A story spread that Jews had committed this murder to obtain blood for use in their religious rituals. Allegations of this kind used to be made against Jews in the Christian world, and are known as the "blood libel". After protests by Jews in the West, the Ottoman sultan, Abdulmecid I, issued an edict (or *ferman*), banning the blood libel throughout his empire as a slander against the Jews. According to the website of the Centre for Israel Education (CIE), it was declared in this edict:

> "We cannot permit the Jewish nation, whose innocence for the crime alleged against them is evident, to be worried and tormented as a consequence of accusations which have not the least foundation in truth." [12]

Notes

[1] See the link: https://jewishheritagealliance.com/story-saga-sefarad/

[2] Jocelyn Hellig, *The Jewish Golden Age of Spain Revisited,* in *Religion in Southern Africa,* Vol. 3, No. 2 (July 1982), p. 23.
See the link: https://www.jstor.org/stable/24763674

[3] See the link: https://jewishheritagealliance.com/history/

[4] See the link: https://mjhnyc.org/blog/1492-letter-regarding-jewish-property-in-spain/

[5] See the link:
https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-spanish-expulsion-1492

[6] See the link: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/turkey-virtual-jewish-history-tour

[7] See ref. in Note 5 above.

[8] Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain, A History of the Sepharadic Experience,* published 1992, p. 151.

[9] See ref. in Note 6 above.

[10] In this and in the preceding quotation from the *Turkish Jewish History Tour* article (see Note 6 above), the italics are as in the original article. The article also gives references to the sources from which it has taken the information in these quotations. In the top extract that we quoted on p. 74, we have corrected three errors. Correctly, it should be "*his vine*" instead of "*his Dine*", and it should be "In 1475, Jews expelled from Bavaria by Ludwig IX" instead of "In 1470, Jews expelled from Bavaria by Ludwig X".

[11] See ref. in Note 8 above, p. 151. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, published in 1906, Elijah ben Elkanah Capsali (d. circa 1555 C.E.) was a Turkish Talmudist and historian, whose book *Seder Eliyahu Zutta,* "a history of the Turkish empire from the earliest times down to the year 1522, is an important contribution to general history, as well as to the history of the Jews." He was "not only an excellent stylist … but was also a reliable historian." See https://jewishencyclopedia.com/ under Capsali.

[12] See: https://israeled.org/9-jews-freed-after-damascus-blood-libel/

9. Muslims save Jews from Nazi persecution

Role of Turks in saving Jews in the Holocaust

There are numerous examples of Muslims saving the lives of Jews in Europe and North Africa during the persecution of Jews by Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. First we look at the role of Turkey and Turkish officials.

Einstein asks the President of Turkey to help Jewish scientists

In 1933, as the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany began, the famous physicist Albert Einstein, in his capacity as honorary President of the Union for the Protection of the Well-Being of the Jewish Population (OSE), wrote a letter to the President of the Turkish Republic to permit Jewish science researchers from Germany to come and continue their work in Turkey. In his letter dated 17 September 1933, in typed English, Einstein writes:

> "I beg to apply to Your Excellency to allow forty professors and doctors from Germany to continue their scientific and medical work in Turkey. The above mentioned cannot practise further in Germany on account of the laws governing there now. … Out of a great number of applicants our Union has chosen forty experienced specialists and prominent scholars, and is herewith applying to Your Excellency to permit

> these men to settle and practise in your country. These scientists are willing to work for a year without any remuneration in any of your institutions, according to the orders of your government." [1]

According to another source commenting on this letter:

> "Not just the forty that Einstein requested, but many scores of German and Austrian Jewish scientists, their families, and their assistants, moved to Turkey. For the next ten to fifteen years the medical schools, and science and technology departments, especially in Istanbul flourished. By the 1950s many of these scientists immigrated to the newly created State of Israel, and to the United States." [2]

The question may occur that, at this time, Turkey was under the rule of Kemal Ataturk who was modernising his country and dismantling its Islamic-based institutions; so how can Einstein's appeal and its granting be credited to a Muslim country? However, Turkey's granting of shelter to Jews, and its fair and just treatment of them, had gone far back for centuries under Ottoman Muslim rule, as shown above. The support provided to Jews by Ataturk's regime was very much a continuation of the tradition of the Ottomans.

Turkish diplomats in Europe who saved Jews

The role of Turkish diplomats in saving Jews in Nazi-occupied countries in Europe, especially France, from being transported to concentration camps has been coming to light through research in recent years after being ignored for many decades. This subject is so vast that we can only give its outline here. In the case of two such diplomats, books have been written about their lives and rescue work: Behiç Erkin (d. 1961) [3] and Selahattin Ülkümen (d. 2003).[4]

1. Ülkümen is recognised by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Centre of Israel, as one of "the Righteous Among The Nations" and his story is on their website.[5] He was the Turkish consul-general on the island of Rhodes in 1944 when the Germans began deporting the island's 1700 Jews to concentration camps. He obtained the release of some 50 Jews from the authorities by claiming that they were Turkish citizens or spouses of Turkish citizens, and by stretching the definition of Turkish citizen to include as many as possible.

Ülkümen was invited to Tel Aviv to a ceremony, held on 26 June 1990, to receive his title of "Righteous Among The Nations". Israeli and Turkish dignitaries were present, along with several people whom he had saved in Rhodes. After the ceremonies he was received by the President of Israel, Chaim Herzog. Speaking in explanation of his actions, Ülkümen said:

> "I believe in God, I am a Muslim, and I did nothing but listen to my conscience. My conscience pricked. I am a Muslim, yes, but, above all, I am a man who believes in humanism, in humanity. I put myself in the place of those who would have been the victims." [6]

2. Behiç Erkin came to Paris in 1939 as the Turkish ambassador. After the German occupation of France, they compiled lists of names of Jews. In Paris there were more than 5000 Jews of Turkish descent, and an estimated 20,000 in the whole country. Many of them were not Turkish citizens. So as not to be treated as French Jews, and thus deported to concentration camps, they applied to the Turkish embassy to be given Turkish citizenship certificates. Behiç Erkin instructed his staff to issue them to anyone who could present a Turkish identity document. As to those who merely claimed that their forefathers lived in Turkey, he instructed that they should be taught to memorise in Turkish the words "I am

Turkish, my relatives live on Turkish soil", and then be issued with the citizenship certificate.[7]

In the nominally unoccupied part of France also (known as Vichy France), measures were taken against Jews, requiring them to register themselves and their property. Behiç Erkin protested to the Vichy Foreign Ministry, writing to them that since "Turkey itself recognises no discrimination among its citizens according to race, religion or anything else", therefore, "it feels ill at ease" that France should discriminate between Jewish and non-Jewish Turkish citizens living in France.[8]

3. Necdet Kent (d. 2002) was the Turkish government representative in Marseilles. He saved dozens of Jews of Turkish origin living in France from deportation to gas chambers by giving them Turkish citizenship, even if they did not have proper evidence of their Turkish connections. On one occasion, when some seventy Turkish Jews were herded on to a cattle train bound for the Auschwitz death camp, Kent boarded the train and argued with the German guards until it reached another station and they agreed to let them go.[9]

When Necdet Kent died, a tribute was paid to him in the US House of Representatives by Tom Lantos (California, Democrat) who himself was a Holocaust survivor. Mentioning the above events, he said:

> "Mr. Speaker, Ambassador Kent had an uncommon love of humanity and an even more rare combination of moral and physical courage that saved many Jewish lives during the Holocaust. As a Holocaust survivor who was saved by the great Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, I am constantly mindful that I owe my life to that rare breed of humanity to which Necdet Kent belonged."

and he concluded as follows:

> "Mr. Speaker, Ambassador Kent leaves this world with the admiration and gratitude of humanitarians, and particularly Jews, everywhere. I avail myself of this opportunity and urge all of my colleagues to join me in expressing deep condolences to the Turkish nation, to Ambassador Kent's family, and to the wider human family to which he belonged, on the loss of one of its noblest representatives — a man who, as a mere deputy consul, truly granted 'visas for life'." [10]

In recognition of the efforts of Turkish diplomats who saved Jews during the Second World War, Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre, unveiled a plaque in May 1996 at its location in Har Hazikaron, Jerusalem. The list of the honoured consists of names of twenty diplomats.[11]

In May 2001 the Turkish government held an awards presentation for three of its diplomats, "Ambassador Namık Kemal Yolga, Ambassador Necdet Kent and Consul General Selahattin Ülkümen, … who saved the lives of hundreds of Jews during the Nazi holocaust". The presentation was followed by the opening of the "Visas for Life" exhibition.[12] At the ceremony the Israeli ambassador to Turkey, Uri Bar-Ner, said in his address:

> "As one who lost his entire family, 300 people, in the Holocaust, I salute the Turkish diplomats for their heroic actions… If there had been more like these brave people, millions of Jews would have been saved. While most of Europe kept silent or even collaborated with the Nazis, Turkey did its best to save its Jews and viewed them as equal citizens. … In 1492 the Ottoman Empire saved Spanish Jewry from being exterminated.

> During the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire saved many Jews from Eastern Europe's pogroms and from other parts of the Empire. In [the] 1930[s] Turkey gave refuge to hundreds of Jewish scientists who ran away from Nazi Germany. … I wish that my family, who lived in Poland during the Second World War, would have been Turkish citizens — they would have been alive today." [13]

Role of Muslims of Albania in saving Jews

We need only quote here information published by Yad Vashem under the title "Muslim Albanians Who Rescued Jews During The Holocaust". This article features eight men and women from among those Albanian Muslims whom it recognised as "Righteous Among the Nations" between 1992 and 2004. In the Introduction to this topic, their website says:

> "Following the German occupation in 1943, the Albanian population, in an extraordinary act, refused to comply with the occupier's orders to turn over lists of Jews residing within the country's borders. Moreover, the various governmental agencies provided many Jewish families with fake documentation that allowed them to intermingle amongst the rest of the population. The Albanians not only protected their Jewish citizens, but also provided sanctuary to Jewish refugees who had arrived in Albania, when it was still under Italian rule, and now found themselves faced with the danger of deportation to concentration camps. …
>
> Albania, the only European country with a Muslim majority, succeeded in the place where other European nations failed. Almost all Jews living within

> Albanian borders during the German occupation, those of Albanian origin and refugees alike, were saved, except members of a single family. Impressively, there were more Jews in Albania at the end of the war than beforehand." [14]

There is an article entitled *Albanian Muslims Rescued Jews from the Nazis* on the website of 'United with Israel', which describes itself as having become "the world's largest Jewish pro-Israel community, with over 10 million followers in 180 countries". The article says:

> "Prior to WWII, only 200 Jews lived in Albania, yet by the end of the war, about 2,000 Jews lived within the country because so many Jews fled Greece, Austria, and other locations in Europe to take shelter there. Other Jews, such as Albert Einstein, used Albania in order to pass on to other countries. Immigration officials in Albania permitted Jews to enter even if they didn't have the proper paperwork and when the Nazis took over, the local inhabitants protected the Jews who lived within their country, providing them with paperwork stating that the Jews were Albanian Muslims. As a result, the Jews who fled to Albania were spared the horrors that the rest of the Jews of Europe endured.
>
> Indeed the Albanian Muslims have an honor code known as besa, meaning to keep the promise, which mandates hospitality and protection of guests as if they are members of one's own family. … Yet, the reality is that other peoples in Europe did not live by the besa code, thus preventing what happened in Albania from happening elsewhere. The Albanian Muslims truly live by the Quranic principle, which is

also cited in the Talmud, 'If one saved a life, it would be as if he saved all humanity'." [15]

Role of Arabs in saving Jews from Nazi persecution

Robert Satloff, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, has done considerable research on this subject and published a book in 2006 entitled *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*.[16]

In his introduction, he writes that he is, by training, a historian of the modern Middle East who has studied the language and culture of the Arabs, and has lived among them. He adds: "I am also a Jew … I am loyal to my country, America, and proud of my connection to the Jewish homeland, Israel" (p. 1). In the aftermath of the attacks that took place in the USA on September 11, 2001, Satloff decided the most positive response he could offer was to "combat Arab ignorance of the Holocaust" (p. 5), and for this he needed to show its relevance to Arabs as well, to make them "see the Holocaust as a source of pride, worthy of remembering, not just something to avoid or deny" (p. 6).

He says he recalled the principle enunciated in the Quran that "whoever saves one life, saves the entire world", which is found in similar words in the Jewish Talmud, and concluded that even if he could "tell the story of a single Arab who saved a single Jew during the Holocaust" (p. 6), it would serve his purpose. But he found so much more that "what started as a small, boutique effort to find one Arab who saved one Jew mushroomed into the most complex mega-project of my life" (p. 7). Despite this, his book is "a more modest undertaking" as compared to the "mammoth task" of research that, he hopes, will be carried out by future researchers (p. 7). To find material, Satloff travelled to various countries in North Africa,

the Middle East and Europe. Among these countries, Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia had been under French rule, but during 1940–1944 this rule was in the hands of the Vichy regime of France which collaborated with Nazi Germany.

At the time of the publication of his book, Satloff also wrote an article in *The Washington Post,* with the heading: *The Holocaust's Arab Heroes.* It is useful to quote some background from it. He begins by pointing out that denial of the Holocaust is nothing exceptional in the Arab world, and it is in fact promoted by Arab leaders and institutions. Then he adds:

> "Yet when Arab leaders and their people deny the Holocaust, they deny their own history as well — the lost history of the Holocaust in Arab lands. It took me four years of research — scouring dozens of archives and conducting scores of interviews in 11 countries — to unearth this history, one that reveals complicity and indifference on the part of some Arabs during the Holocaust, but also heroism on the part of others who took great risks to save Jewish lives. Neither Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial to Holocaust victims, nor any other Holocaust memorial has ever recognized an Arab rescuer. It is time for that to change. It is also time for Arabs to recall and embrace these episodes in their history. …
>
> From June 1940 to May 1943, the Nazis, their Vichy French collaborators and their Italian fascist allies applied in Arab lands many of the precursors to the Final Solution. These included not only laws depriving Jews of property, education, livelihood, residence and free movement, but also torture, slave labor, deportation and execution. …

> The Arabs in these lands were not too different from Europeans: With war waging around them, most stood by and did nothing; many participated fully and willingly in the persecution of Jews; and a brave few even helped save Jews. … The few who risked their lives to save Jews provide inspiration beyond their numbers." [17]

In Satloff's book, *Among the Righteous,* the title of chapter 5 is a quoted remark from a Jew of Tunisia: *"The Arabs Watched Over the Jews"*. This chapter introduction is as follows:

> "At every stage of the Nazi, Vichy, and Fascist persecution of Jews in Arab lands, and in every place that it occurred, Arabs helped Jews. Some Arabs spoke out against the persecution of Jews and took public stands of unity with them. Some Arabs denied the support and assistance that would have made the wheels of the anti-Jewish campaign spin more efficiently. Some Arabs shared the fate of Jews and, through that experience, forged a unique bond of comradeship. And there were occasions when certain Arabs chose to do more than just offer moral support to Jews. They bravely saved Jewish lives, at times risking their own in the process. Those Arabs were true heroes." (p. 99)

Unknown Arab individuals who saved Jews

Satloff then lists numerous examples of individual Arabs in Tunisia, Libya and Algeria who helped the Jews:

> "Decades later, those Jews whose lives were touched by the generosity of Arabs recalled these deeds with a special fondness." (p. 100)

The names of most such Arabs are not known, and as Satloff notes:

> "It is only through the memory of those Jews who benefited from their kindness that we are able to recount their good deeds; these Arabs never received public recognition for opening their hearts to Jews facing persecution." (pp. 108–109)

Among the examples reported by Satloff are the following.

1. A Tunisian Jew, Mirella Hassan, recalled to him:

> "When I was a little girl, my parents told me often of the difficulties they had to survive in this period, and above all of the help they received from their Muslim neighbors — for food, for milk." (p. 100)

She did not remember the names of these helpers:

> "… but only this help given by these Tunisian Muslims, in their own way, what they could, a gesture often made with selfless friendship, which enabled the saving of many lives. … That is my humble testimony."

2. David Guez, who was in the Tunisian city of Sfax during the war, stated:

> "I won't forget the Arab who helped me and allowed me to get an extra loaf of bread every day. Even though it was difficult to obtain bread — you had to wait in line — he would give me an extra loaf. That was a great thing." (pp. 100–101)

3. There were Arabs who, as Satloff discovered by his research, "stepped forward to protect Jewish property from predators, be they European or other Arabs" (p. 101). A Jew, Yaacov Zrivy, recalled in this connection:

> "They said: 'We will keep watch over you, that way nothing will happen to you, no Arab will do anything

> to you.' … The Arabs watched over the Jews." (pp. 101–102)

4. In Libya, in an Italian internment camp for Jews at Giado, south of Tripoli, Arab camp guards worked under Italian commanders. Yehuda Chachmon, a Libyan Jew, recalled that the Italian guards treated the Jews with brutality, but the Arab guards working under them didn't give the Jews any trouble:

> "We were in good relations with them. … The attitude of the Italian police was different from the attitude of the Arab police." (p. 103)

5. Satloff also points out that in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, some Arabs were also persecuted alongside Jews:

> "Not to be forgotten are those Arabs who were persecuted, and sometimes killed, alongside Jews. … It was not unusual for Arabs and Jews to face the pain and torture of Vichy labor camps side by side." (p. 104)

About these hardly-known stories, he says:

> "Not only do they underscore the larger reality of the Holocaust's long reach into the Arab world, but they help recall a moment when at least some Arabs and some Jews shared in the suffering imposed by common persecutors." (p. 105)

6. In Algeria, French Vichy rule required Jews to place their fixed assets in the hands of "conservators" who would manage them. In reality this was a golden opportunity for the conservators to exploit the wealth of the Jews. The Vichy regime offered positions of conservators to both the French colonists living in Algeria and the local Muslims. How did the Muslims react to these lucrative offers? Satloff writes:

> "From the pulpits of Algiers mosques, imams also issued instruction to local Muslims not to take advantage of Jewish suffering for financial gain. This act of self-denial, at a time when many French colonists were getting rich at the expense of Jews, was an especially noble act on the part of the local Muslim community. …
>
> To their great credit, not a single Arab in Algiers stepped forward to accept Vichy's offer. One Friday in 1941, religious leaders throughout the city gave sermons warning all good Muslims to refuse all French offers to serve as conservators of Jewish property. They even forbade Muslims from purchasing auctioned Jewish goods at below-market prices. Despite the economic difficulties faced by Arabs during the war, they refused to take advantage of Jewish suffering for personal gain. And, true to their imams' call, not a single Arab took the opportunity of quick financial gain either to serve as a trustee-conservator or to purchase Jewish property at Vichy-mandated fire-sale prices." (pp. 107, 108)

They were praised for this by José Aboulker, who was a hero of the Jewish resistance in Algiers. He said in a post-war interview that the Arabs resisted pressure from the rulers of Algeria to take part in the persecution of the Jews, and added:

> "When Jewish goods were put up for public auction, an instruction went around the mosques: 'Our brothers are suffering misfortune. Do not take their goods.' Not one Arab became an administrator [of property] either. Do you know other examples of such an admirable, collective dignity?" (p. 108)

King Muhammad V of Morocco

After going through the "nameless" Arabs who came to the assistance of Jews under persecution, Satloff comes to those whose names are known:

> "Not all are anonymous, however. Thanks to testimonies, archives, memoirs, and sometimes, sheer serendipity, we are privileged to know the names of some of those Arabs who helped save Jews from pain, injury, and perhaps death. The most famous was Sultan Muhammad V of Morocco…" (p. 109)

Details of the work of Sultan Muhammad V (d. 1961) are widely available in many sources. Morocco was a French protectorate during 1912–1956, which meant that the Sultan reigned under French authority, largely as a symbolic figure, although he did have influence which the French had to take into account. Below we summarise some relevant information from an article in March 2024 by Theo Zenou in the *Smithsonian Magazine,* a publication of the famous Smithsonian Institution of the USA,[18] with some additions from elsewhere.

When the Vichy French regime attempted to implement anti-Jewish decrees against the 250,000 Jews in Morocco, the Sultan opposed them, although he was forced to approve them on paper. He was appalled at their definition of a Jew by race and descent as this was against the basic teachings of Islam. He was granted the concession that a Jew would be defined by a person's own religious choice. This would provide a way for a Jew to escape persecution as he, or she, would have to self-profess to be a Jew, and not be designated a Jew by anyone else.[19]

There is a famous, widely-quoted statement attributed to Muhammad V, made apparently when the Vichy regime asked

for a list of Jews in Morocco to be made for the purpose of targeting the Jews. Muhammad V replied:

> "There are no Jews in Morocco. There are only Moroccan subjects."

This was also quoted by Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz on a visit to Morocco in November 2021.[20] The Sultan regarded himself as "Commander of the Faithful", i.e., Muslims, and as such he saw "looking after Moroccan Jews as his God-given responsibility. 'Moroccan Jews are my subjects,' he told the Vichy government, 'and it is my duty to protect them against aggression'."[21] This was, as Satloff puts it, "the sultan's generations-old role as descendant of the Prophet and 'Commander of the Faithful' " (p. 110).

For the Sultan's statement, 'Moroccan Jews are my subjects…', quoted above from Theo Zenou's article, he refers to a 1960 book *North Africa, Nationalism to Nationhood,* by Lorna Hahn.[22] This book carries an introduction by Senator John F. Kennedy, written shortly before he was elected President of the USA. It is enlightening to quote further from this book. Lorna Hahn says about the instruction the Sultan received to enforce Vichy France's anti-Jewish laws:

> "It would also have been contrary to strict Islamic law, according to which 'peoples of the book', i.e., Jews and Christians, were to be protected by Moslem rulers … Angered by Nogues [French Resident-General], the Sultan bluntly refused to promulgate the laws, announcing 'Moroccan Jews are my subjects, like all other subjects, and it is my duty to protect them against aggression.' When French officials, despite this declaration, tried unofficially to confiscate Jewish property and even to send Jews into concentration

> camps, the Sultan asked for, and obtained, the cooperation of Moroccan Moslems in combating these actions." (pp. 79–80)

According to Theo Zenou:

> "Sometime later, in a secret meeting at his palace, he told Jewish leaders that the decrees changed nothing. As far as he was concerned, Moroccan Jews were the equals of Moroccan Muslims."

Zenou then draws a contrast with the Pope of the time:

> "A much more prominent wartime leader, Pope Pius XII, never denounced the Nazi persecution of Jews. He even had a secret back channel to Hitler. But Mohammed was made of different stuff. He refused to meet with Nazi officials in Morocco. And, when all eyes were on him, he took a stand."

As an example, at a banquet on the day of an annual royal festival in November 1941, "by his side were his guests of honor: rabbis and Jewish notables". He did this deliberately to snub Vichy officials, and he told them:

> "I absolutely do not approve of the new antisemitic laws, and I refuse to associate myself with a measure I disagree with. I reiterate as I did in the past that the Jews are under my protection, and I reject any distinction that should be made among my people."

Theo Zenou also cites the opinion of Richard Hurowitz, author of *In The Garden of the Righteous: The Heroes Who Risked Their Lives To Save Jews During The Holocaust,* published in 2023, who was interviewed for this article:

> "Mohammed took a very principled stand. … It was actually at his own personal peril because it was a slap

> in the face of Vichy. … What he did ended up delaying actions that could have been taken earlier. … If he hadn't taken a stand, then Jews could have been rounded up before the Allies came."

In December 2022, the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, wrote a letter to the present King of Morocco, which was shared with the media, thanking the King and "the people of Morocco who, for generations, have acted to protect the security, welfare and cultural heritage of the kingdom's Jewish community." He added:

> "When millions of Jews faced the horrors of the Holocaust in the 20th century, King Mohammed V provided a safe haven for his Jewish subjects. Wherever they are, Moroccan Jews recall with pride and affection the memory of your grandfather, His Majesty King Mohammed V, who is remembered as the protector and guardian of Jews in his realm." [23]

Lastly, in connection with King Mohammad V of Morocco, it may be noted that the Jewish Museum of New York held an exhibition from September 2000 to February 2001: *Morocco: Jews and Art in a Muslim Land.* The introduction to the exhibition also quoted his statement: " 'There are no Jews in Morocco, only Moroccans,' replied King Mohammed V to the German representative who demanded a list of Jewish residents during World War II." [24]

Tunisians who safeguarded Jews

1. In Tunisia there was Ahmad Pasha Bey (d. 1942) and his cousin and successor Moncef Bey (d. 1948) who, like Muhammad V in Morocco, ruled under the French government. They too had no choice but to sign anti-Jewish laws demanded by the Vichy regime. However, they "offered vital gestures of

public support for Jews facing Vichy persecution". They used their little authority to award royal distinctions to several Jews for services to the state. After the German invasion, which followed, Moncef and members of his cabinet and of the royal court protected the Jews by warning them of German plans, helping them to avoid arrest orders and avoid being sent to labour camps, intervening to prevent deportations, and hiding Jews who had escaped from German labour camps.[25]

2. Si Ali Sakkat (d. 1954) had been a former government minister in Tunisia and Mayor of Tunis, and had long retired to his farm before the war. After the German occupation, a forced labour camp for Jews had been set up near his farm. When the Allies attacked Tunisia, about sixty Jews managed to escape during the battle. They reached Sakkat's farm. He provided them with shelter and food, and kept them safely there until the Allies were able to capture the area.[26] Satloff writes:

> "… references to Si Ali's exploits appeared in at least two books describing the wartime experience of Tunisia's Jewish community… The two Jewish historians who wrote about wartime Tunisia more than half a century ago had no reason to fabricate a story of Si Ali's courageous rescue of Jews, so we have no reason to doubt it happened." (pp. 118, 119).

3. Robert Satloff has devoted chapter 6 of his book (pages 121 to 137), to his search for the truth about the exploits of one Khaled Abdulwahhab (d. 1997). He was a Tunisian about whom he first heard in November 2002 from a Jewish woman survivor living in California, by the name of Anny Boukris. According to her, during the German occupation of Tunisia, Khaled Abdulwahhab had protected several Jewish families by taking them to his huge farm, 20 miles from the town of Mahdia where they lived. The story was that he took them

away suddenly to his farm when he realised that a German officer was intending to rape Anny Boukris's mother. Satloff arranged for her story to be tape-recorded. He also went to Tunisia in May 2004 where he traced Arab friends of her family and obtained confirmation of her story. Later he learnt that there was a daughter of Khaled Abdulwahhab and he visited Tunisia again in 2005 to interview her, and obtained further details of his life.

Satloff writes that this survivor's story meets "Yad Vashem's standard to consider a candidate for its honorable designation 'Righteous Among the Nations' " (pp. 126–127). He has further confirmed her story from other witnesses. He ends his chapter as follows:

> "Perhaps his will be the first Arab name honored by Yad Vashem as a 'Righteous Among the Nations'." (p. 137)

In a recent article by Satloff, *A Yom Hashoah message, from disgust to hope,* published on 5 May 2024 on the website of *The Times of Israel,* he writes:

> "And some, like the courageous but long-overlooked Tunisians Khaled Abdulwahhab and Si Ali Sakkat, made a choice to protect, defend or rescue Jews facing persecution and possible death. They are — and certainly ought to be — among the Righteous. (Attention, Yad Vashem.)" [27]

His reference to Yad Vashem in parentheses is due to their decision in 2011 that Khaled Abdulwahhab "was not eligible for the Righteous Among the Nations designation" because he did not need to break the law nor risk German reprisals in sheltering Jews. However, in their decision, as published on their website, Yad Vashem did acknowledge that:

> "The account of this honorable Tunisian's solidarity with the Jewish victims commands our deep appreciation. It should be remembered and will certainly inspire people worldwide. Indeed, Yad Vashem's publications department has published his story in Hebrew." [28]

Responding to this decision, a Jewish lady from Los Angeles, Eva Weisel, a retired banker, wrote an article in *The New York Times,* 27 December 2011, entitled *Honoring All Who saved Jews.* In it she describes how Khaled Abdulwahhab had protected her family after German soldiers took over their house by taking them to his farm. To substantiate this further, she cites the video-recorded evidence of a cousin, Edmee Masliah, who was with her at the time, and also put her own account into a notarized letter. She ends her article as follows:

> "Sixty-nine years after pinning a yellow star to my chest in my native land, I know that I was able to enjoy a long, full life because Abdul Wahab confronted evil and saved me, as he saved other fortunate members of my family. I hope that Yad Vashem reconsiders his case before no one is left to tell his story." [29]

In 2012 Khaled Abdulwahhab's daughter, Faiza Abdul-Wahab, wrote an article in *The Jerusalem Post,* the Israeli newspaper, entitled *An Arab 'Righteous Gentile': A daughter's story,* referring to Eva Weisel's article. She wrote:

> "Khaled Abdul-Wahab was my father, though he never spoke about his heroism with us. … I didn't learn about his heroism until five years ago. … I call on the leadership of Yad Vashem to heed Eva's plea and to reconsider the case while she and the other rescued members of her family are still alive. If Yad Vashem

> recognizes my father as a righteous, I would proudly travel to Jerusalem to accept the honor in his name.
>
> I have been overwhelmed by the outpouring of gratitude expressed by numerous organizations — including the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, the Anti-Defamation League in New York, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, and the Gardens of the Righteous in Milan — which have already honored my father's memory." [30]

Benghabrit, Rector of the Paris Mosque

Also mentioned by Robert Satloff in his 2016 *Washington Post* article is the following:

> "And there is strong evidence that the most influential Arab in Europe — Si Kaddour Benghabrit, the rector of the Great Mosque of Paris — saved as many as 100 Jews by having the mosque's administrative personnel give them certificates of Muslim identity, with which they could evade arrest and deportation. These men, and others, were true heroes." [31]

There are numerous sources mentioning how Benghabrit saved Jews, with varying numbers of the rescued being given. I summarize below the information from an article *Benghabrit: The Muslim Rector who saved Jews from the Gestapo* at *The History Reader* website of St. Martin's Press of Macmillan publishers USA.[32]

The Grand Mosque of Paris was completed in 1926. An Algerian community, known as the Kabyles, was the dominant Muslim population of Paris. After the Nazi occupation, many Kabyles joined the resistance:

"Thanks to the heroism of the Mosque's rector, Si Kaddour Benghabrit (1868–1954), the Kabyles were free to bring their Jewish friends and coworkers to the Mosque for safe haven.…

Benghabrit committed himself and his congregation to making the Grand Mosque a sanctuary for endangered Jews. … first, he offered European and Algerian Jews shelter in the same apartments inhabited by Muslim families; second, he gave them fake identity certificates, to prove they were Muslims, not Jews; finally, he initiated the use of the cellars and tunnels beneath the Mosque as escape routes. …

Benghabrit was arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo a number of times as rumors of the Mosque's resistance inevitably got out. A higher German command, however, ordered him released each time.

Salim Halali, a Berber Jew from Algeria, popular singer of North African songs and friend of Benghabrit, sought and found safety in the Mosque. The rector not only made him a Certificate of Conversion to show — falsely — that Salim's grandfather had converted to Islam; he also had an unmarked tombstone in the Muslim cemetery in Bobigny inscribed with the family name of Halali's grandfather. After the Nazis checked it out, they left Halali alone. He lived out the war in the Mosque, passing as a Muslim when the Nazis, responding to rumors of a Mosque underground, barged in regularly on a search-and-deport mission. …

Albert Assouline, a North African Jew who with a Muslim friend escaped from a POW camp in Germany, surfaced in Paris without identity papers. The Mosque

> welcomed him and his friend. While hiding out in the basement, Assouline saw many other Jews in hiding… Because North African Jews and Muslims looked alike, had similar surnames, were circumcised, and spoke Arabic, the Jews, with their fake Muslim identity certificates, were able to pass as Muslim when the Gestapo came searching for evidence of a Jewish sanctuary movement. After the war, Assouline gave testimony that he witnessed 1,600 Jews passing through the basements and sub-basements of the Mosque and descending into the dark labyrinthine tunnels, eventually making it out onto the boats waiting at the Halles aux Vins on the Seine to carry them to safety in the Maghreb and Spain."

The assessment of this article about the varying reports is as follows:

> "Some sources dispute Assouline's estimate, claiming that at most five hundred Jews were given a home and then safe passage by Benghabrit and the Mosque. One Israeli scholar dismisses the story as exaggerated from start to finish. There is not much data available to provide the actual numbers of Jews rescued by the Mosque. But what there is — old newspapers, scholarly research and personal testimonies from Jews who after the war told of hiding for its duration in the Mosque's basements — supports the details of this hidden history.
>
> Benghabrit was given the Grand Croix de la Légion d'Honneur after the war. But Eva Weisel has noted in The New York Times that getting Yad Vashem in Israel to grant the honorific of 'Righteous Among Nations' to

> a Muslim, even the Oskar Schindler-like Benghabrit, is and will remain very difficult."

A somewhat doubtful view of Benghabrit's role in saving Jews and resisting the Nazis is expressed in a paper published in 2012 by Ethan B. Katz, a historian and scholar of Jewish Studies in the USA. It is entitled *Did the Paris Mosque Save Jews? A Mystery and Its Memory,* and offers a critical examination of the available evidence.[33] Katz informs us that "neither the mosque nor Benghabrit have received recognition" from various French Jewish communal or Holocaust commemoration bodies, nor from Yad Vashem, the reason being that "a paucity of evidence has made each reluctant to embrace it as historical fact" (pp. 258–259). Under the sub-heading 'Ambiguous Historical Evidence', he explains that his aim is to "uncover a less mythical but more interesting, sometimes paradoxical, story of Benghabrit and the mosque under the Occupation" (p. 270). According to Katz, Benghabrit's position was an ambiguous one, involving "resistance" to the Nazis alongside "collaboration and accommodation", but he adds: "Such ambiguities mimicked those within the war-time conduct of much of the larger French population" (p. 271).

Nonetheless, Katz acknowledges that "Assouline's account of his own experiences seems credible", although "it is harder to confirm the mosque's involvement with 1700 refugees" and the details which he gives of the systematic resistance (p. 273). He then goes on to add: "Yet we do have additional testimonials regarding individuals who found protection through the mosque and its associated institutions" (p. 273). He mentions first the account given by the singer Salim Halali, and then two stories, each told by a close relative of a Jew who was provided with assistance at the mosque (pp. 273–275). There are two stories by Muslims of how they themselves, with others,

helped and hid French resistance fighters and fallen parachutists of the Allied forces fighting to free France from Nazi occupation (p. 275). For this purpose they used the mosque as well as the Franco-Muslim hospital. Katz writes about Benghabrit: "As head of the Institut Musulman, he controlled the Franco-Muslim hospital. It is likely that Benghabrit would have known of the hospital's resistance work and would have given at least tacit approval" (pp. 275–276).

After relating other events in connection with Benghabrit's actions and attitudes in that period, Katz writes:

> "Taken together, this evidence strengthens the story of Benghabrit as a resister and, to a limited degree, a 'righteous among the nations'. Indeed, the French government's *Journal Officiel* of July 26, 1947 even documents that after the war Benghabrit received the Medal of the Resistance with the rosette." (p. 279)

Katz adds a footnote here in which he writes:

> "Unfortunately, we have no indication of the basis for the award. … The rosette was a superior level of the Medal of the Resistance, awarded to only a small fraction of recipients."

What else could the "basis" be, except that he supported the resistance! It seems that in his paper Katz is caught between undeniable evidence of Benghabrit's actions in resisting the Nazis or saving Jews and the need he feels to introduce doubt and caution at every step.

Robert Satloff has covered the story of Benghabrit in chapter 7 of his book *Among the Righteous*. To seek confirmation of his role and that of the Paris mosque, he went to Paris in October 2005 and interviewed the head of the mosque, Dalil

Boubakeur, at his office. At the end of the meeting, Satloff was shown a copy of a typewritten note from the records of the French foreign ministry, dated 24 September 1940. The image of the original note in French is displayed by Satloff on p. 156. In it, a French official was informing his minister of the concern of the German authorities about the Mosque's officials. The translation of the note is as follows:

> "The occupation authorities suspect the personnel of the Mosque of Paris of fraudulently delivering to individuals of the Jewish race certificates attesting that the interested persons are of the Muslim confession. The imam was summoned, in a threatening manner, to put an end to all such practices. It seems, in effect, that a number of Jews resorted to all sorts of maneuvers of this kind to conceal their identity." (p. 155)

Satloff reaches the following conclusion:

> "In the end, what matters is the fact that Boubakeur confirmed, with powerful supporting evidence, the fact that at least some Arab officials of the Great Mosque helped some Jews survive the German occupation, most likely at great personal risk. … Whether Benghabrit the person or the mosque as an institution deserves recognition for helping to save Jews is less important than the fact that acts of rescue took place. In the heart of Europe, some Arabs saved some Jews during the Holocaust." (pp. 157, 158)

Iranians who helped the Jews

An article in *The Times of Israel* in February 2012 opened as follows:

> "An Iranian official risking his life to save Jews? This scenario, while implausible nowadays, actually

> happened during the Holocaust. Meet Abdol Hossein Sardari, a diplomat at the Iranian mission in Paris during the 1940s. Known as the "Iranian Schindler," he helped thousands of Jews escape certain death — by turning the Nazi race ideology on its head." [34]

The article refers to the then publication of a biography of Sardari (d. 1981), entitled *In the Lion's Shadow: The Iranian Schindler and His Homeland in the Second World War* by Dr Fariborz Mokhtari, an Iranian academic working in various USA universities.[35]

Abdol Hossein Sardari (d. 1981) was the Consul General of Iran in Paris and became incharge of consular affairs after the German occupation when the Iranian ambassador left for Vichy to establish the embassy in the nominally unoccupied France. There is an entry about Sardari in the *Holocaust Encyclopedia* of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opens as follows:

> "Iranian diplomat Abdol Hossein Sardari provided critical assistance to Iranian Jews in occupied France (1940–1944). … Sardari appealed on several occasions to exempt Iranian and other Central Asian Jews living in German-occupied France from anti-Jewish measures decreed by French and German authorities." [36]

This entry tells us that in October 1940 Sardari wrote officially to the authorities in France, on the letterhead of the Imperial Consulate of Iran, arguing that "an ethnographic and historical study", validated by the German Embassy in Paris showed that the Jews in Paris originating from Iran and Central Asia were not Semitic by race but were Iranians whom the Nazis themselves considered as Aryans. They were only Jews due to their observance of the rites of Judaism.

In 1941, the British and Soviet Allies took Iran under their control and as a result Iran's diplomats in France lost their position. The Holocaust Encyclopedia entry adds:

> "but Sardari remained in Paris, continuing to work unofficially on behalf of Iranians, including Iranian Jews, residing in France. … In letters dated September 29, 1942, and March 17, 1943, Sardari communicated with German officials concerning the status of Iranian Jews residing in Paris and surrounding towns in an effort to protect them from arrest and deportation." [37]

In 1943, the Germans agreed to exempt all such Jews, of Iranian or Central Asian origin, from anti-Jewish measures. Sardari, over the time of the German occupation of France, issued passports to such Jews indicating, as an article in a 2019 issue of *The Times of Israel* puts it: "The bearer was not Jewish but "*Djougouten*," an Iranian minority that was ethnically Aryan." [38] According to the same article, the number of passports issued by him is estimated to be between 500 and 1000, and as some passports were for whole families, the number of Jewish lives saved may be 2000 or more.

This article, entitled *Unrecognized 'Iranian Schindler' said to have saved countless Paris Jews in WWII,* informs us that Sardari is not included among those designated as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Israel's national Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem. Replying to an inquiry from *The Times of Israel,* the Director of its department at Yad Vashem said: "The case of Abdol Hossein Sardari is familiar to Yad Vashem and the Commission for the Designation of Righteous among the Nations. The commission reviewed the documents in the past but found insufficient documentation to award him the title Righteous among the Nations." [39]

In 1978, three years before his death, when approached by Yad Vashem, Sardari told them:

> "As you may know, I had the pleasure of being the Iranian Consul in Paris during the German occupation of France, and as such it was my duty to save all Iranians, including Iranian Jews." [40]

We mentioned above the biography of Sardari by Dr Fariborz Mokhtari, published in 2012. It has received much notice and acclaim. The author has been invited to give talks at various institutions in the USA, for example at The Center for Strategic and Diplomatic Studies (CSDS) at the University of South Florida in 2018. It was stated in the announcement for this event: "His work has been featured by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Times of Israel, Haaretz, and the Jewish Chronicle, as well as in newspapers such as the Washington Post, the Telegraph and Sydney Morning Herald." [41] He was also interviewed in the podcast series *Voices on Anti-semitism,* produced by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.[42]

In December 2020 the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, along with the news agency IranWire.com, launched *The Sardari Project: Iran and the Holocaust,* a project "Named In Honor of Iranian Diplomat Abdol Hossein Sardari Who Worked to Save Iranian and Non-Iranian Jews In Occupied Paris". The aim of the project is:

> "to distribute articles and videos about the Holocaust, including Iran's largely unknown role as a haven for between five and six thousand Jews fleeing Nazi-occupied territories." [43]

Polish Jewish refugees in Iran

The "unknown role" referred to above is the evacuation of Polish refugees from the Soviet Union to Iran. In September

1939 the Soviet Union, through a pact with Nazi Germany, took over the eastern part of Poland, while the Germans took over the western part. Soviet authorities deported more than a million Poles as enemies to various parts of the Soviet Union. Many were murdered and others were detained as prisoners of war, often in labour camps in very harsh conditions. In 1941 the Soviet Union joined the Allied side against Nazi Germany, and agreed to evacuate these Polish prisoners to Iran. Iran was suffering from economic difficulties and food scarcity itself. The USA Holocaust Encyclopedia says in its article on *Polish Refugees in Iran during World War II*:

> "Despite these difficulties, Iranians openly received the Polish refugees, and the Iranian government facilitated their entry to the country and supplied them with provisions. Polish schools, cultural and educational organizations, shops, bakeries, businesses, and press were established to make the Poles feel more at home.
> …
> In total, over 116,000 refugees were relocated to Iran. Approximately 5,000–6,000 of the Polish refugees were Jewish." [44]

The refugees were later moved to other countries, though a few stayed permanently. Many, of course, died while in Iran, and about these the above source says:

> "A Polish cemetery in Tehran is the main and largest refugee burial site in Iran, with 1,937 graves. There is a separate area in the cemetery belonging to the Jewish community of Tehran. Each of these 56 graves exhibits a Star of David and the name of the deceased in Polish."

There were many children among the refugees, and they became known as 'The Tehran Children'. A woman whose

father and aunt were Tehran Children, Mikhal Dekel, wrote a book, *Tehran Children — A Holocaust Refugee Odyssey,* published in 2019. On its sales page on Amazon (UK) its first line of description is: "The extraordinary true story of Polish-Jewish child refugees who escaped the Nazis and found refuge in Iran." Further on, it is stated:

> "Dekel fuses memoir with historical investigation in this account of the all-but-unknown Jewish refuge in Muslim lands." [45]

Mikhal Dekel, born in Israel, is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at City College, New York. A book signing event with the author was held in collaboration with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in June 2020, under the title *The Tehran Children: Rediscovering Iran's Role in a Holocaust Rescue*. In the announcement of this event it is noted:

> "Nearly a thousand Jewish children were among the more than 100,000 Polish citizens evacuated from Soviet Central Asia to Iran in 1942. … For up to a year, they lived in former military barracks of the Iranian Air Force under the care of the Jewish Agency … before they were eventually permitted to emigrate to Palestine …
>
> While many Iranians know that their country sheltered Polish refugees during World War II, fewer are aware that many of these refugees were Jewish. … [The event will] explore why some aspects of this wartime history might be obscured, as well as the significance of the critical role that Iran played in helping local Jews as well as Polish Jewish orphans during the Holocaust." [46]

There was an interview with Mikhal Dekel in January 2021 published on the IranWire news website, under the title *Tehran Children: Remembering Iranians' Hospitality to Polish Jewish Refugees During the Holocaust.*[47] In this article, the reporter describes her book as:

> "the story of a few hundred thousand Polish Jews, who escaped Nazi extermination in Europe by finding refuge in the predominately Muslim lands of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran, as well as India."

The article also says:

> "What compelled Dekel to begin her journey was a polemical article by the Iranian scholar Abbas Milani, who had defended Iran against the accusation of Nazi connections during the Holocaust. "When the Nazi killing machines began their slaughter of innocent Polish Jews," Milani had written, "1,388 Jews, including 871 children, were moved to Tehran, where they lived in relative safety until they moved to Israel." The words left Dekel staring at her screen and thinking of her father, who had passed away in 1993, and his surviving sister, Rivka (Regina), who was still alive."

As to the hospitality with which the refugees were treated in Iran by the public, Mikhal Dekel said:

> "When the refugees came to the shore of Pahlavi [the old name for the Caspian Sea port of Anzali in Iran's Gilan province], around 1942, many people looked at them and saw horrible-looking children, and spontaneously brought them food and so on. They looked on them with pity rather than contempt. In Tehran,

> former refugees recall even the poorest porters offering to share their meager meals with foreigners."

The article further notes:

> "Since the book came out, many people have written to Dekel, and she now knows that there were more Polish Jewish refugees than she initially thought. 'Quite a few people remained as stowaways in Tehran,' she says. 'Maybe hundreds. They lived in a different kind of Iran, in the urban sphere and not in the refugee camps. There were also German Jewish refugees who came to Iran after the rise of Hitler in the 1930s and worked as engineers, doctors and had their own experiences. Many of them lived in Iran from early 1933 until the end of the war'."

Islam "saving" the Jewish religion

Having covered above the subject of Muslims saving lives of Jews from antisemitic oppression, we end with a digression by turning briefly to a wider aspect of the matter, affecting the whole existence of the Jewish religion.

In 2012 a lecture was given by David Wasserstein, Professor of History at Vanderbilt University, USA, a specialist in Jewish and Islamic history. His invited lecture was delivered at the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. An article adapted from this lecture was published in *The Jewish Chronicle* of London, which is the world's oldest Jewish newspaper, established in 1844. The article, entitled *So, what did the Muslims do for the Jews?,* begins as follows:[48]

> "Islam saved Jewry. This is an unpopular, discomforting claim in the modern world. But it is a historical truth. The argument for it is double. First, in 570 CE, when the Prophet Mohammad was born, the Jews and

> Judaism were on the way to oblivion. And second, the coming of Islam saved them, providing a new context in which they not only survived, but flourished, laying foundations for subsequent Jewish cultural prosperity — also in Christendom — through the medieval period into the modern world."

David Wasserstein tells us that, at the advent of Islam, the Jews living under Persian rule, in the east, and those living under Byzantine, Christian rule, in the west, had become separated from one another due to the constant and long-standing enmity and wars between the two empires. The Jews under Christian rule had "lost the knowledge of their own culturally specific languages — Hebrew and Aramaic … and also lost access to the central literary works of Jewish culture", while "Jewish cultural life continued to prosper" in Babylon under Persian rule. If the conflict between the two powers had continued, this separation "would have intensified", and as a result: "Jewry in the west would have declined to disappearance in many areas. And Jewry in the east would have become just another oriental cult."

The Islamic conquest of both these empires, and the spread of Islamic rule from Spain in the west to beyond Iran in the east, meant, as David Wasserstein writes:

> "Almost all the Jews in the world were now ruled by Islam. This new situation transformed Jewish existence. Their fortunes changed in legal, demographic, social, religious, political, geographical, economic, linguistic and cultural terms — all for the better. …
>
> Jews were not confined to ghettos, either literally or in terms of economic activity. The societies of Islam

> were, in effect, open societies. In religious terms, too, Jews enjoyed virtually full freedom. …
>
> Within this huge area, Jews lived and enjoyed broadly similar status and rights everywhere. They could move around, maintain contacts, and develop their identity as Jews."

This era extended to about the year 1300 C.E. when it came to a close. Wasserstein ends with the following observations:

> "Jewish cultural prosperity in the middle ages operated in large part as a function of Muslim, Arabic cultural (and to some degree political) prosperity: when Muslim Arabic culture thrived, so did that of the Jews; when Muslim Arabic culture declined, so did that of the Jews.
>
> In the case of the Jews, however, the cultural capital thus created also served as the seed-bed of further growth elsewhere — in Christian Spain and in the Christian world more generally."

Conclusion to Part II

The information and the stories we have compiled in Part II of this book show that Muslims, acting individually, as well as through their state institutions, helped the Jews by treating and viewing them as human beings subjected to extreme distress. During the Holocaust itself, Muslims came to the rescue of Jews to *no less an extent* than certain heroic members of the main European communities did. In fact, given the small number of Muslims in Europe, their help for the Jews was proportionally greater than what other Europeans did to help them.

The major reason why the stories of Muslims coming to the rescue of Jews under Nazi persecution, and in earlier history as that in the Spanish expulsion, are not widely-known or in any kind of prominence, is undoubtedly the mutual hostility generated by the modern Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the one hand, it suits the supporters of the state of Israel to portray its Muslim critics as continuing the same European antisemitism which culminated in the Holocaust. On the other hand, the Muslim critics of Israel, seeing the staunch and unwavering Western support for Israel, have difficulty in believing that the Jews could have suffered atrocities when living under those same nations. Thus neither side can imagine that Muslims could have come to the rescue of Jews under persecution.

Demonising your enemy and entirely ignoring his suffering seems to be an instinctive human response.

Notes

[1] I (the author of this book, Zahid Aziz) have typed the above text from the image of this letter as displayed on the website of The World Holocaust Center, Yad Vashem. This body was established by the government of Israel in 1953, charged with the task of preserving documents relating to the Holocaust. See the link: https://collections.yadvashem.org/en/documents/13866458

[2] The Jewish Currents website at the link: https://jewishcurrents.org/september-17-einsteins-letter-ataturk

[3] Arnold Reisman, *An Ambassador and A Mensch: The story of a Turkish Diplomat in Vichy France,* published May 2010.

[4] Yücel Güçlü, *Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish Righteous among the Nations,* Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022.

[5] See the link: https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/ulkumen.html

[6] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), p. 65.

[7] Arnold Reisman, *Turkey and Turkish Jews in France: 1940–1944,* published October 2009 at SSRN, pp. 4–6.

[8] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), p. 18.

[9] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), p. 26.
See also the article *September 20: The Turkish Consul Who Saved Jews* on the JewishCurrents website:
https://jewishcurrents.org/september-20-the-turkish-consul-who-saved-jews

[10] Congressional Record, September 30, 2002, Vol. 148, No. 125 — Daily Edition, page E1688, under Extensions of Remarks. See the link: https://www.congress.gov/congressional-record/volume-148/issue-125/extensions-of-remarks-section/article/E1688-1
See also Yücel Güçlü, pp. 26–28.

[11] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), pp. 15–16.

[12] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), p. 23.
See also the Turkish government's *Press Release Regarding The Award Presentation For Three Turkish Diplomats Who Saved the Lives of Hundreds of Jews During The Nazi Holocaust (Unofficial Translation) No: 88 - May 9, 2001,* at the link: https://www.mfa.gov.tr/press-release-regarding-the-award-presentation-for-three-turkish-diplomats-who-saved-the-lives-of-hundreds-of-jews-during-the-nazi-holocaust-_br__unofficial-translation__br_no_88--_may-9_-2001.en.mfa

[13] Yücel Güçlü (see note 4 above), pp. 24–25. Where the original says "In 1930", clearly it should be "In the 1930s".

[14] See: https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/besa/index.asp

[15] *Albanian Muslims Rescued Jews from the Nazis* by Rachel Avraham. See the link: https://unitedwithisrael.org/albanian-muslims-rescued-jewish-lives-from-nazis/

[16] Robert Satloff, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories from the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands,* published by Public Affairs, New York, 2006.

[17] *The Washington Post,* Opinions, October 8, 2006. See the link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2006/10/08/the-holocausts-arab-heroes/9173b6ef-e4bb-458a-a708-d38202fb64a3/

[18] *The Moroccan Sultan Who Protected His Country's Jews During World War II,* by Theo Zenou, March 8, 2024. The author is a historian, journalist and research fellow who has written for the *Washington Post* as well as *FT* and the *Telegraph* of the UK. See the link:

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-moroccan-sultan-who-protected-his-countrys-jews-during-world-war-ii-180983903/

[19] Satloff, pp. 109–110.

[20] *The Times of Israel,* 25 November 2021, article by Judah Ari Gross at the link: https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-op-ed-gantz-says-rabat-helped-return-body-of-rabbi-who-died-in-morocco-last-week/

[21] See ref. in Note 18 above.

[22] Lorna Hahn, *North Africa, Nationalism to Nationhood,* Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1960, with an introduction by John F. Kennedy.

[23] Website of the Abraham Accords Peace Institute; see the link: https://www.aapeaceinstitute.org/latest/israels-herzog-thanks-morocco-for-saving-jews-during-holocaust

See also *i64News,* December 27, 2022 at the link:

https://www.i24news.tv/en/news/middle-east/north-africa/1672173790-israel-s-herzog-thanks-morocco-for-saving-jews-during-holocaust

[24] See the link: https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/morocco-jews-and-art-in-a-muslim-land

[25] Satloff, pp. 111–112.

[26] Satloff, pp. 114–119.

[27] See the link: https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/a-yom-hashoah-message-from-disgust-to-hope/

[28] Statement *Abdelwahab: the full picture* at the link: https://www.yadvashem.org/blog/abdelwahab-the-full-picture.html

[29] *The New York Times,* Opinion section, December 27, 2011. See the link: https://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/28/opinion/honoring-all-who-saved-jews.html

[30] *The Jerusalem Post,* January 28, 2012. See the link: https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-Ed-Contributors/An-Arab-Righteous-Gentile-A-daughters-story

[31] See ref. in Note 17 above.

[32] Article *Benghabrit: The Muslim Rector who saved Jews from the Gestapo* by Susan Cahill, at the link: https://www.thehistoryreader.com/historical-figures/benghabrit/

[33] *The Jewish Quarterly Review,* vol. 102, no. 2, Spring 2012, pp. 256–287. See the link: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41480287

[34] Raphael Ahren, *Beating Nazis at their own game* in *The Times of Israel,* 25 February 2012. See the link:

https://www.timesofisrael.com/beating-the-nazis-at-their-own-game/

[35] Details on Amazon at: https://www.amazon.com/dp/0752463705

[36] See the link: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/abdol-hossein-sardari-1895-1981

[37] See the link in the Note 36 above.

[38] *The Times of Israel,* 1 May 2019, article *Unrecognized 'Iranian Schindler' said to have saved countless Paris Jews in WWII.* See the link: https://www.timesofisrael.com/unrecognized-iranian-schindler-said-to-have-saved-countless-paris-jews-in-wwii/

[39] See link in Note 38 above.

[40] Holocaust Encyclopedia of the Unites States Holocaust memorial Museum; see the link in the Note 36 above.

[41] *Author of Acclaimed Book about "The Iranian Schindler" to Speak at USF Event,* see the link: https://www.usf.edu/news/2018/author-acclaimed-book-about-the-iranian-schindler-speak-usf-event.aspx

[42] Link to podcast: https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/podcast/voices-on-antisemitism/fariborz-mokhtari

[43] See the link: https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/museum-and-iranwirecom-launch-sardari-project-bringing-holocaust-history-t

[44] Holocaust Encyclopedia of the Unites States Holocaust memorial Museum; see the link: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/polish-refugees-in-iran-during-world-war-ii

[45] See on Amazon: https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/1324001038

[46] *The Tehran Children: Rediscovering Iran's Role in a Holocaust Rescue.* See the link: https://smithsonianassociates.org/ticketing/tickets/tehran-children-rediscovering-irans-role-in-holocaust-rescue

[47] See the link: https://iranwire.com/en/special-features/68585/

[48] Article published as The JC Essay, *The Jewish Chronicle,* May 24, 2012. See the link: https://www.thejc.com/lets-talk/so-what-did-the-muslims-do-for-the-jews-dp63sti8

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Reviews

"Dr Aziz's book is very well-written and communicates the core thesis — that Islam is not inherently antisemitic — very accessibly and effectively. This message needs to be heard much more widely and clearly than is currently the case and I hope the book will contribute significantly to achieving this objective."

Professor Steven Greer
Emeritus Professor, University of Bristol Law School
Research Director, Oxford Institute for British Islam

"*Islam and Antisemitism* by Zahid Aziz is a thoughtful exploration of the relationship between Muslim and the Jewish people, particularly addressing the misconception that Islam promotes antisemitism. This book is critical in clarifying the divisive rhetoric, and in building bridges between Jewish and Muslim communities in today's turbulent times.

Aziz begins by noting that allegations of inherent antisemitism within Islam are rooted more in political propaganda and misunderstandings than in the actual teachings of Islam. Aziz delves into Islamic scriptures, particularly the Quran, to demonstrate that Islam does not advocate hatred towards Jews. On the contrary, the Quran acknowledges the validity of Jewish prophets and scriptures, and promotes harmonious relations between Muslims and Jews. Aziz examined how the teachings of the Quran and the

Prophet Muhammad emphasize the importance of protecting all people, regardless of their faith, providing historical evidence of Muslim efforts to rescue Jews during times of crisis, particularly highlighting rescue actions taken during the Holocaust by Turkish government under Ataturk's leadership.

Islam and Antisemitism is a compelling work that challenges the divisive misconceptions about Islam's stance on Jews and antisemitism. It presents a view of Islam that is inclusive and just, by emphasizing the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad which advocate for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Jews, and by promoting a better understanding of the shared values and history between Muslims and Jews.

This is a critical work, especially in today's turbulent global climate, marked by rising religious intolerance towards both Jews and Muslims globally, political conflicts, and provoking allegations. In a time when social media and misinformation can rapidly spread misconceptions and fuel hatred, Aziz's work helps to clarify that the issues are more about politics and power than about faith, and offers readers a foundation to build bridges among people of different faiths, making it an indispensable resource for our times."

Nurcan Ensari, Ph.D.
Professor, Organizational Psychology Programs,
Los Angeles California School of Professional Psychology,
Alliant International University

About this book

This book seeks to dispel the grave misconception that Islam teaches its followers to bear hatred and enmity towards Jews. In fact, Islam regards the Jewish religion as being of true Divine origin, exactly as Islam presents itself to be. It requires Muslims to believe in, and honour, the prophets of the Israelites whose lives are mentioned at length in the Quran.

According to the Quran, Jews are human beings like all others on earth, including Muslims. The same standards of justice and treatment are applied by Allah to Jews as to Muslims. The Quran prohibits Muslims from discriminating against Jews and depriving them of their rights. The Prophet Muhammad treated Jews with respect, and he abhorred and prohibited the making of racial slurs against them.

This book, in Part I, deals at length with the points summarized above. Then in Part II it turns to the historical angle, showing that when Jews were under persecution by Europeans, in Spain 500 years ago and under Nazi-ism in the 20th century, Muslim individuals, rulers and states came to their assistance and saved many Jewish lives. Testimony of Jews themselves, and historians, is provided to illustrate numerous incidents of Muslims risking their own lives to save Jews during the period of the Holocaust.

Reviews of this book are quoted at the end of the book, just before this back cover.